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S E R M O N S

Preach'd on

Several Occasions.

BY

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The Second Volume.

L O N D O N :

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TO THE  
READER.

THE former Volume of Dr. *Conant's* Sermons Published by me in his Life-time has found such Acceptance , that it has encouraged those to whose care the perusal of his Notes was committed , to think of publishing a Second ; of which I shall only say, That the Reader may be assured, not only that  
A 3                      they

they are of that Reverend  
Person's own Composition ;  
but also of the Number of  
such as He designed (were  
there occasion for it) for the  
Press.

Apr. 27.  
1697.

*John Cbichester.*

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## The First Sermon.

GEN. XXII. 1, 2.

*And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham. And he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering; upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.*



IN this Chapter we have that very well known, but Wonderful History of God's commanding *Abraham* to offer up his Son to him for a Burnt-Offering; together with the Issue and Consequents thereof. The whole History, which I purpose (God willing) to treat of, may be resolved into these parts:

B

I. We

## The First Sermon.

I. We have the Command or Injunction of God to *Abraham*, in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>d</sup> Verses.

II. *Abraham's* Obedience thereunto, from thence to the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> Verse.

III. The Event or Issue thereof, in the 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, and 14<sup>th</sup> Verses.

IV. The high Acceptance which *Abraham's* Obedience found with God, in the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, and 18<sup>th</sup> Verses.

Of these Parts in order. I begin with the first of them, God's Command to *Abraham*. In the Command there are these Three things to be considered ;

1. The Circumstance of Time ; *And it came to pass after these things.*

2. The Phrase or Form of Speech in which the Action of God in this matter is expressed ; he *tempted Abraham*.

3. The Matter of the Temptation, or of the Command ( for here they are one and the same thing, he tempted him by laying such a Command upon him ), He must offer his Son for a Burnt-offering.

As for the first of these, the time when God was pleased to lay this Command upon *Abraham*, that is pointed at or intimated in the first words of the History, *And it came to pass after these things.* But you will say,

say, It doth not appear what the things are which must here be understood as intended. I answer, 'Tis not to be questioned but that we are to understand the things that are related in the foregoing Chapter ; for what should rather be intended, than those things that had been immediately before recited ? Now there we read of the Birth and Circumcision of *Isaac* ; of *Ishmael*'s mocking him, and of his being thereupon cast out of *Abraham*'s Family, together with *Hagar* his Mother. There we read that God told *Abraham*, that thus to dismiss *Ishmael* should not be grievous to him, because in *Isaac* his Seed should be called : *His Seed*, that is, The Seed, by way of Eminency, concerning which God had spoken, saying, *In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.* Tho *Ishmael* was his Son as well as *Isaac*, yet not from *Ishmael* but from *Isaac* was this his Seed to be reckon'd. And furthermore, whereas he saith, *In Isaac shall thy seed be called* ; he means, in *Isaac*'s Posterity, in *Jacob*, or *Israel*, the Son of *Isaac*, from whom they should be called *Israelites*. Now after these things ; after that God had thus declared his Will concerning *Abraham*'s Family, and after that *Ishmael* being cast out, *Abraham* had been told that in *Isaac*, and not in *Ishmael*, his Seed should be called, and that in him, at least in his Off-spring, he must

*The First Sermon.*

expect the fulfilling of God's Promise, *That in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed*; after all this, God commands him to offer up *Isaac* to him for a Burnt-Offering. Which Circumstance of Time, as it made the Command of God the more difficult to be complied with, and *Abraham's* Trial the greater, so in the issue it render'd both his Faith and his Obedience so much the more admirable.

And hence we may observe, That God most wisely orders and determines the Circumstances of those Trials with which he exerciseth his People, in such a manner as may best conduce to the Ends for which he brings such Trials upon them. If his intentions be to humble them for sin, to correct and reform them, then their Afflictions shall be so circumstantiated, as they may smart most, and work most thoroughly and effectually upon them: If they be for the Exercise and Improvement of their Graces, then the Circumstances of them shall be such as may best promote and further that his design. God's design here was to give *Abraham* an occasion of acting his Faith and Obedience to the heighth; and therefore he tries both the one and the other at such a time and in such a manner as the Strength and Lustre of those Graces might best appear, and as might hold him forth as a rare Pattern of Faith and Obedience



## The First Sermon.

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dience to all succeeding Ages. The like Instance of God's most wise Providence, we may observe in God's dealings with *Jephthah*. God had given *Jephthah* a glorious Victory over his Enemies the Children of *Ammon*, and now he returns to his House at *Mizpeh* in Triumph. But to humble him, and that he might not be lifted up with the Success of his Undertaking, his own Daughter, and Only Child, must be coming out of his house to meet him with Timbrels and Dances; which was such an Allay and Cooler to his Joy and Triumph, as scarce any thing else in all the world could have been: For he had vowed a Vow unto the Lord, saying, *If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into my hands, then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace, shall be the Lord's, I will offer it up for a burnt-offering.* Now that amid his Joy his own Daughter, and Only Child, should meet him, how sad and humbling a Providence was this! When he saw her, he rent his Cloaths, and said, *Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me; for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back.* In which Dispensation there was also this to add much unto his Affliction, that it was through himself that this befel him; it was through his

Judg. 11.  
34, 35, 36.



own Rashness in making such a Vow ; for a Rash Vow most Divines conceive it to have been.

And indeed so very often it is, there is some Act or Neglect of our own, either occasioning or furthering our Sufferings, which Circumstance puts a sting into them, and makes them wound us so much the more deeply. O, saith the person suffering, if I had not done this, or neglected that, I might have prevented what is befallen me ! And how doth it pierce my heart, to think that I my self should have been the Procurer of what is come upon me or mine ! But, I say, however it be, there is an over-ruling Providence most wisely ordering and disposing the Circumstances of our Trials in such a manner as may best conduce to the effecting in and upon us what he intends them for.

And hence we may learn several things.

As 1. To observe and heed carefully the Circumstances of our Trials ; the Time and Season of them, the Matter and Subject of them, the Means and Instruments of them : For hereby we shall come to discern much of the Wisdom of God in them ; as also much of his Fatherly Love and Gracious Providence, which we should be ready to overlook, if the Circumstances of his dealings with us be not heeded.

2. It

2. It may also teach us to submit to our most Wise and Gracious Father's disposal in all our Trials, however circumstantiated. Though there should be some particular Circumstances in our Trials which are most grievous and afflicting to us, yet let us bear them quietly and patiently, never suffering our hearts to rise against them; never allowing our selves to say, I could have submitted, and have born my Trial, had it not been for such or such a Circumstance, which so aggravates my Sufferings, that my burthen is intolerable. For what is this but to *charge God foolishly*, as if he did not order all the Circumstances of your Trials with the greatest Wisdom and Exactness, and as if you could have contrived them better than he hath done?

But here one Caution may be useful. After things are past, and cannot be recalled, we are apt to afflict our selves beyond all measure for those things which perhaps were neither our Sin nor our Imprudence. Though we did what for the present we judged best and most advisable, most fit to be done, and most agreeable to our duty, yet because the event was quite contrary to what we aimed at and desired, and because what we did with a good Intention, proved rather prejudicial than advantageous and helpful towards the promoting of

that good which we had in our eye, therefore we lay load upon our selves, and charge our selves much more heavily, than in reason we ought to do. In such cases, therefore our first and main enquiry should be, Whether there were any sin in what we did, or omitted? And if upon the most impartial enquiry we can find no sin or guilt to charge our selves with, we must not any further disquiet our selves. We did what for the present, as matters lay before us, appeared fittest to be done; and if God made that use of our endeavours which we never intended, and thereby furthered that which above all things we desired to decline and keep off, we must sit down contented, resting satisfied in his disposal of matters, *who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will*, and serves his Providence of us not as we would, but as he pleaseth. In a word, where in the issue you seem to have contributed towards your own suffering, you are so far to be troubled for it as there was any sin in it, and no further. If this Caution were well observed by us, how much causeless trouble and disquiet would it free us from! And how much more easy would it render many of our Afflictions to us than now they are, as we represent the Circumstances of them to our selves, making the utmost advantage of them that we can, towards the heightning of our trouble!

So

So from the Circumstance of Time, when this Command was laid upon *Abraham*, I come to the Phrase or Form of Speech in which the Action of God therein is expressed, He *tempted Abraham*. Thus *Moses* coming to set down this History, expresseth the Action of God, that we might not be surprized and startle at the strangeness of the thing, when we read or hear it. But how is this affirmed of God, that he Tempted *Abraham*? St. James saith, *Let James 1. no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.* 13. For reconciling *Moses* and the Apostle, we must distinguish of Temptations. A Temptation may either be of Seduction or of Trial. A Temptation of Seduction is proper to Satan and his Instruments; and 'tis that whereby they Seduce to Evil, or endeavour to Seduce; and this Seduction is twofold, either into Error, or into Sin: Of this kind of Temptation, S. James speaks when he saith, *God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.* A Temptation of Trial is that whereby the Servants of God are proved or tried; and in this sense is God said to have tempted *Abraham*: By a most difficult Command laid upon him, he proved or made trial of his Faith and Obedience.

But

But here again, that we run not into a mistake, and frame unmeet notions and conceptions of God, and such as are not agreeable to the Perfection of his Nature, we must still remember that God is Omniscient; *all things are naked and opened unto his eyes; neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight. He searcheth the heart and trieth the reins. He understandeth our thoughts afar off.* Wherefore 'tis impossible that he should by any trial or experiment he makes of us, come to know any thing in us, or concerning us, that he was before ignorant of. Thus indeed we prove and trie one another, that we may, if we can, find out and discern that which we were uncertain of before; but for us to have such thoughts of God, were unworthy of him, and infinitely below his Perfections. This were to make him like our selves, as dimighted and defective in knowledge as we are. In short therefore, God proves and tries men, not to inform himself of what he knew not, but to inform the Persons whom he tries, and others; he proves them to the end that what lay hid in them, not only from other men, but from themselves also, may be discovered to them and others. He knew the measure and strength of *Abraham's* Faith before; How is it possible that he should be ignorant of it, who knows all things, and who had wrought and cherish-  
cd



ed that Grace in him, who had infused it into his Soul, preserved it, and fed it there, who had both planted and watered it, given it both its being and all its increases? But that *Abraham* himself might better understand what God had wrought in him, what strength of Faith he had endowed him with; and that others also might understand it, God makes an high experiment upon him, he lays a most strange and difficult Command upon him, that might exert, call forth, and discover all the strength of Faith which he had bestowed on him. And what hath been said of the trial of his Faith, the same also may be said concerning his Obedience.

But it may be here further Objected, That we read in the 2 *Chron.* 32. 31. concerning *Hezekiah*, that *in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, God left him to trie him, that he might know all that was in his heart.* Which words seem to imply, that God therein designed his own information rather than *Hezekiah's*, or as well as *Hezekiah's*.

I Answer, That those words ought not to be understood, cannot be understood in a proper sense; 'tis a figurative speech, in which God speaks of himself after the manner of men: Because men try one another that they may know how they stand affected, which way they incline, what in  
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2 Chron.  
32. 31.  
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such or such cases and circumstances they will do, and the like ; therefore God useth the same form of speech concerning himself when he tries men : He said that he left *Hezekiah to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart* ; but his meaning only is, that he might make known and discover all that was in his heart. Though God be pleased so far to condescend as to represent himself and his actions sometimes in such a manner, and in such language, as might seem to make him like us, subject to the same passions, infirmities, and defects, as we are ; yet we must take heed that however we still frame our thoughts and conceptions of God suitably to his Nature and Perfections as near as we can. If we should take whatever in Scripture is said of God in a proper and literal sense, we should have such Notions of him, and of his Nature, as would divest him of his Attributes and Deity : Here that Rule must ever be observed, *Quod Deo tribuitur ἀπορροπα. Δὲς intelligendum θεοπετῶς* . Whatsoever is attributed unto, or spoken of God in way of conformity unto, or compliance with the manner, passions, or affections of man, must be so understood as may carry a congruity unto, and condecency with the Nature and Perfections of God.

Thus we have seen in what sense God is said to have Tempted *Abraham*, and how  
*Moses*

*Moses* and *St. James* are accorded and reconciled: as likewise how God is said to have left *Hezekiah* to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.

And now I shall here, upon occasion of what is said concerning God's tempting *Abraham*, discourse a little more largely and fully concerning this Subject.

Shewing,

1. How, in what manner, and in what ways God is wont to Tempt men.
2. To what ends he Tempts men.
3. How and wherein his Temptations differ from Satan's.
4. Answer some Objections.
5. Make some Application.

I begin with the first of these, endeavouring to shew how, in what manner, and in what ways God is wont to Tempt men. And here we shall be able much better to apprehend positively how God tempts men, if we first understand negatively how he doth not tempt them. Negatively therefore,

Deut. 13.

3.

4. 34.

7. 19.

29. 3.

1. God doth not tempt any man, by infusing any evil, any corrupt Principle, or malignant Quality into him, whereby he is inwardly disposed or inclined to Sin.

2. Neither

2. Neither doth he inwardly hurry him on, impel, or thrust him forward into Sin.

3. Neither doth he excite, stir up, incline, allure, intice, persuade, or encourage any man to Sin. 'Tis upon several accounts absolutely impossible that God should any of these ways tempt any man.

For (1.) This would make him the Author of Sin, which is directly contrary to the Purity of his Nature, and utterly inconsistent with his Holiness. *Hab. i. 13.* *He is of purer eyes then to behold evil,* any the least Evil with approbation, and much more then to infuse into man's heart any Malice, any evil Quality, or sinful Principle, or to impel him and thrust him forward into Sin, or to become the Author of man's Sin in any of the other ways before-mentioned.

(2.) This were inconsistent with his Justice in punishing Sin: For how could he justly punish Sin in the Creature, if he should thus Efficiently contribute to it, and promote it?

(3.) It were also as inconsistent with his Goodness thus to promote the Sin, and consequently the Misery and Ruin of his Creatures. For he that in any of the ways before-mentioned, either impels or draws a man into Sin, makes way for his destruction.

(4.) 'Tis

(4.) 'Tis no less inconsistent with his Sincerity, to dehort and dissuade men from sin, and by terrible Threatnings to seem to deter them and scare them off from it, and yet to thrust them forward, or draw them into it. I say, upon all these accounts 'tis utterly impossible that God should efficiently further man's sin in any of the ways above recited.

4. Neither doth God by any Eternal Act of his lay upon man such a necessity of sinning, as takes away or infringeth his liberty therein. If he did, it must be either by his Foreknowledge, or Decree. But neither his Foreknowledge of sin, nor his Decree concerning it, do lay any such fatal necessity of sinning upon any man.

1. As to his Foreknowledge of sin, that toucheth not the Will of man, to incline or dispose it one way or other, much less doth it offer any force to it, impelling it, or thrusting it forward into sin, but leaves it every way as free as if no such Foreknowledge had been. If I could certainly foreknow what you would do in some particular business that lies before you, would my Foreknowledge of what you will do, take away your liberty? As long as I only foreknow what of your own accord and free choice you will do, neither impelling, nor urging, nor as much as persuading, nor any way endeavouring to dispose or incline you



you to do it, when you do it, is not your Action as free and voluntary, as if I had not at all foreknown it? Add hereunto, That God's Foreknowledge is such, as it respects and takes in not only the Matter or Substance of what he foreknows, but also the Manner and all the Circumstances thereof. He doth not only foreknow *what* you will do, but *how* you will do it. As he foresees that a man will in such or such a matter offend, so he foresees that he will freely do it. Thus he did not only foresee, that *Adam*, left to the liberty of his own Will, would fall, but that he would voluntarily fall; so far is God's Foreknowledge of sin from laying any such necessity upon any man, as that he must sin, and cannot but sin, whether he will or no. His acts of sin, though foreknown of God, are not only as voluntary and spontaneous as if they had not been foreknown, but they are therefore voluntary, because God foreknew they would so be. I mean not, that his Foresight is the cause of their being voluntary, no more than of their being; but only, that 'tis so far from hindering the Spontaneity or Voluntariness of them, that 'tis a certain Argument and Demonstration thereof.

2. Neither by any Decree doth he necessitate men to sin whether they will or no.

For

For 1. God doth only decree to permit sin; his decree concerning it is only permissive, not effective; his eternal purpose is only to suffer it to be, not to cause it to be.

2. This his permission of it, is not a giving men leave to sin, or allowing them to sin, but a not hindering them in the use of their liberty, or a pure letting them alone to do as they please, and a not interposing by his restraining or sanctifying Grace, to keep them from sin. Now this kind of permission of sin, including no efficiency on God's part towards it, doth not in the least make God chargeable with man's sin: For we may not think that God is bound to keep and with-hold men from sin, as we are to keep and with-hold one another from sin as far as we are able. If God were obliged to with-hold men from sin, then there never had been, nor could have been any sin in the world. That he wanted not Power to have prevented all sin, if he had pleased, cannot be questioned by any man that acknowledgeth his Omnipotency; and if he were under any obligation to hinder it, then it could not consist with his Holiness to permit it to be. And thus I have shewed, that neither God's Fore-knowledge of sin, nor his Decree to permit it, doth lay any such necessity upon the Creature, as to render it less free or voluntary

C

luntary in the Commission of sin. Hence it follows undeniably, that notwithstanding God's fore-knowledge of sin as future, and his decree to permit it, the whole blame of man's sin lies at his own door, and there is not the least shadow of reason to impute it to God, either in whole or in part: And consequently, that their plea is both wicked and unreasonable, and such as shall never serve their turn, or stand them in any stead at the day of their trial, who to excuse themselves, or lessen their guilt, lay the blame upon the fore-knowledge or decree of God. What will this plea avail them when they come to stand before the Tribunal of Christ, where it shall appear before all the world, before Angels and Men, that no eternal or temporal Act of God did in the least infringe or lessen their freedom and liberty in sinning, and that they sinned as voluntarily as if no such Acts on God's part had ever been?

So I have shewed Negatively, How God doth not Tempt men.

Positively he Tempts men divers ways.

As 1. By laying difficult Commands upon them; which sometimes he enables them to obey, as here he did *Abraham*; and sometimes being left to themselves they disobey, as did *Jonah*, who endeavoured to go to *Tarsus*, when he had been enjoined to go to *Nineve*, and proclaim that

Message

Message there which he thought might prove dangerous to him.

2. By laying sore and heavy Afflictions on them, which try their Faith and Patience, as on *Job*.

3. By heaping much of the world upon them, and giving them a prosperous condition as to outward things, to try how they will bear their Prosperity, and what use they will make of their abundance.

4. By laying Objects of an indifferent nature before them, of which they may either make a good use or a bad, as Grace or Corruption prevails.

5. By permitting Satan and his Instruments to tempt them.

6. By substracting his Grace, or suspending the influences of it, and leaving them to themselves, as in the case of *Hezekiah* before mentioned. Now in all this God doth no more than what he may righteously do; and if the Persons thus tempted do sin, 'tis wholly through the Corruption of their own hearts, and the Instigation of Satan or his Instruments.

So you have seen how and in what ways God may be said to Tempt men.

It now follows in the 2d. place, That I shew to what end God Tempts men. That God therein, as in all other his Dispensations, aims at his own Glory, I may take for granted, so as I need not spend time to

prove it: That is the great end of all his works, whether of Creation or Providence. But besides this greatest and highest end, there are other inferior and subordinate ends of God's tempting men. In brief, he tempts men to discover them, not to himself, (for, as hath been shewed, he hath no need of making experiments upon them for his own information) but to discover them to themselves and to others; and this, both as to their strength and their weakness.

1. He tempts or tries them to discover them to themselves, to discover their weakness and their strength to themselves. And here two things in this dispensation are implied and supposed; That they are in part ignorant of themselves; And that 'tis of concernment, and beneficial to them, to know themselves better, or to be better informed concerning their estate.

1. All men, even the best, the most knowing Persons, even such as study themselves and commune with their own hearts most, are but in part acquainted with themselves. They may be much weaker than they think they are, and sometimes and some ways 'tis possible they may be stronger. *Hezekiah* did not think there had been so much Pride and Vanity in his heart, as was discovered when God had left him to himself to try him; no doubt he did not apprehend



prehend himself so weak as that trial discovered him to be. And on the other side, 'tis not improbable but that *Abraham* found himself stronger: It was not easy for him to believe that he had that measure of Spiritual strength which he had, unless God by that great and strange trial had given him proof of it, and discovered it to him.

2. 'Tis of great concernment to men to know themselves better.

I. To know their own weakness.

(1.) That they may be more humble, and think more soberly of themselves, not over-valuing themselves, or rating themselves above what they are, as did the Church of *Laodicea*, that *thought she was rich, and increased with goods, and that she had need of nothing; and knew not that she was wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* Rev. 3. 17.

(2.) That they may have less confidence in themselves, and in their own supposed strength, and rely more entirely on God, and live more dependently on him. This benefit, no doubt, *Peter* had by the discovery of his weakness to him, when carnal fear so far prevailed with him, that he denied his Master; before, out of the abundance of his self-confidence he durst affirm, that if all men should deny Christ, yet would not he. We may be assured that ever after that his sad experience of his



weakness, discovered by his shameful fall, he was less confident of his strength, and more careful to place his confidence in God.

(3.) That they may be more watchful over themselves, and more heedful to avoid all Temptations. 'Tis a man's want of better acquaintance with his weakness, that makes him bold to venture upon Temptations.

(4.) In short, That they may be more diligent in the use of all good means, whereby they may be preserved from falling into sin.

(5.) That they may be more tender and compassionate towards others that have fallen.

(6.) That having had such experience of their weakness when God leaves them, they may give him the Glory of their strength at other times. Did God never leave them to themselves, and let them have experience of their weakness, they would think they stood by their own strength, and that they needed not his supporting hand to uphold them.

All these benefits and advantages accrue to them from the knowledge of their defects, and their acquaintance with their weakness.

2. 'Tis also beneficial to them to know their own strength several ways.

(1.) It

(1.) It furthers their thankfulness to God for that strength which he hath bestowed on them. Unless they know what they have received, How can they be thankful for it?

(2.) It relieves them against those fears, misgivings of heart, and discouragements which they are subject unto, from the contemplation of those sore trials and temptations which they may meet with before they dye. The experience of the strength which they have had in former trials, makes them less distrustful, less anxious and solicitous in reference to future evils, the prospect whereof is wont to disturb and fright them.

2. God tempts or tries men, to discover them to others also, both as to their weakness and their strength. And 'tis beneficial to others, that their weakness should sometimes be discovered to others.

(1.) That they may not think too highly of them. This is our temper, when we have good thoughts of a man, we are apt to over-value him, and to give him too high a room in our hearts. To correct this error of our judgment, and excess of our affections, God oftentimes in great wisdom tries such a Person some way or other, and so far leaves him to himself, as that his weakness is discovered. This discovery of his weakness abates that excess of esteem and value

that others had for him, and brings it down to a just moderation.

(2.) The discovery of a man's defects and weakness to others is of good use and great advantage to them, in that it gives them warning to look to themselves lest they also be tempted, and in the time of trial discover the same infirmity which such a Person hath discovered, or greater. And this is one great reason why so many of the frailties and falls of God's Children are left upon record in Scripture, and transmitted to Posterity: Their infirmities, and sometimes their fouler miscarriages are our admonitions and cautions. If many of those eminent Persons who seemed to be so strong, bewrayed such weakness in the hour of temptation, What other lesson may this teach us but that of the Apostle, *Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall?* This is a clear and natural inference which we are all concerned to make.

1 Cor. 10.  
12.

'Tis likewise very useful and advantageous that a man's strength should sometimes be discovered and appear to others as well as his weakness. And this

(1.) To preserve and keep up in their hearts that just esteem of him which is due to him, and which cannot without injury be denied him.

(2.) To give them an occasion of acknowledging the Goodness of God to him, and of

of Blessing him for what he hath wrought in him, and bestowed upon him.

(3.) To humble them in reflection upon themselves, and in consideration of their own great weakness in comparison of that strength which they observe in another.

(4.) To provoke them to an holy emulation, and a more zealous endeavour after that strength which they see another hath attained, but come far short of themselves.

Thus I have shewed for what ends God Tempts men; which was the second thing to be spoken to.

3<sup>dly</sup>. As touching the difference between God's tempting men, and Satan's tempting them; this may easily be gathered from what hath been spoken. They widely differ in respect both of the manner and the end.

1. They differ in the manner. For God never Tempts men by impelling, perswading, or enticing them to Evil, but only by proposing such things to them, and laying such things before them as their corruption abuseth, and from whence they take occasion of sinning. But Satan directly impels, perswades, and enticeth to sin; so that he is most properly the Author of it: Not indeed the sole Author of it, but the Author of it together with the Actors; and sometimes as the Circumstances of sin are,

are, he is more the Author of it than the Actors themselves.

2. They also differ as much in respect of the end. For God in Tempting men after that manner as he doth, hath most Wise, Just, Holy, and Gracious ends; he therein designs his own Glory, the Benefit of those who are Tempted, and of others, as hath been shewed. But *Satan*, as he Tempts in a far other manner than God doth, so likewise to far different ends: In his Temptations he aims at the Dishonour of God, the Destruction of the Tempted, and the Ruin or Prejudice of others. This is so clear from the foregoing Discourse, that 'tis needless to add any thing by way of further confirmation thereof. I go on therefore to the

4th. Thing propounded, which was to Answer some Objections against what hath been delivered concerning the manner of God's Tempting men. The Objections are taken from several passages of Scripture, which seem to ascribe more unto God in the evil Actions of men, than what hath been now declared concerning that matter.

*Obj. 1.* We read in the Holy Scriptures of God's stirring up men, of his moving them, and inclining them to Evil, and turning their hearts that way. It was wickedly done of *Hadad* and *Rezon*, that they



they made such opposition against Solomon, and created such trouble to him and his People; and yet 'tis said, that *the Lord stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite*, 1 Kings 11. 14. And that God stirred him up another adversary, *Rezon the Son of Eliadah*, v. 23. of the same Chapter. In like manner we also read in the 1 Chron. 5. 26. that *the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, and the spirit of Tiglah Pilneser king of Assyria, who carried them away captives*. And yet these Assyrian Kings sinned greatly in so doing. So again in 2 Chron. 21. 16. 'tis said that *the Lord stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines, and of the Arabians*. And thus we read Psal. 105. 25. that *God turned the heart of the Egyptians, to hate his people, and to deal subtilly with his servants*. So it was David's sin to Number the People, for which he and they were severely dealt with, and yet 'tis said that the Lord moved David thereunto, 2 Sam. 24. 1. Lastly, David prayed Psal. 119. 36. *Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness*. And Psal. 141. 4. *Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practice wicked works with men that work iniquity*. In which places David's praying that God would not incline his heart to Covetousness, or to any evil thing, may seem to imply that God may, and sometimes doth incline mens hearts to evil.

To

To all these Scriptures I Answer in the general, That they are not to be understood in a proper sense; for that would make God the Author of sin, the very thought whereof is to be abhorr'd. That he who is of infinite Purity and Holiness, who is of purer Eyes than to behold Evil with approbation, who hates sin with a perfect and irreconcilable hatred, who forbids it upon the highest and severest penalties, who threatens and punisheth it with all manner of temporal Plagues and Judgments here in this world, and with the far more dreadful evil of unexpressible and endless Misery in the world to come, should in a proper sense be said to stir up, or move, or incline, or dispose the Spirits or Hearts of men to what is sinful, is as impossible as that he should deny himself, and act directly contrary to his own Nature, and to all those discoveries and declarations of himself and of his Nature, which he hath made in his Word.

2. In particular, God is said to stir up Enemies against his Church and People, or against particular Persons, when he suffers and permits them to be stirred up by Satan or by his Instruments; and when he leaves them to be excited, transported, acted, and hurried on by their own Pride, Ambition, Covetousness, Passion, Envy, Malice, thirst

thirst after Revenge, or the like. So he is said to move or incline them to that which ought not to have been done by them, because he leaves them to themselves to be influenc'd by Temptations, and to be sway'd and carried away by the swinge of their own Corruption; and because he permits them to be wrought upon by such objects as lye before them, and to be moved, inclined, or disposed to this or that unlawful thing, through the propension of their sinful Nature that bends or draws them that way.

But you will say, If God do no more than this, Why is he said to stir up, move, incline, and the like? These phrases seem to import and signifie a great deal more: Why then are they used, if no more be intended?

I Answer, 1. Because God doth not interpose to hinder men, to blunt the edge of Temptations, to suppress and keep down their Corruption; in a word, because he doth not restrain them when he might if he pleased.

2. Because he lets them alone on purpose, and in order to those ends before-mentioned. Because he doth not barely suffer and permit them so to act, or so to be acted, but designedly, and with an eye at those uses which he intends to make of their sin.

3. Be-

3. Because by his most Wise, Powerful, and Righteous Providence, he so Directs, Governs, and Over-rules the whole matter, as that his own ends are effectually accomplished and brought about, even by the Sins of men. So then, though God only permits Satan and his Instruments to tempt to sin, and men to act it, yet in regard that God doth not merely stand by as unconcerned, but permits these things on purpose, and with a Wise and Righteous design, and governs and over-rules them so, as effectually to accomplish that his own design, the Scripture expresseth God's acting herein, by stirring up, moving, inclining, and the like; all which phrases are ever to be understood with such pious caution, and religious tenderness of God's Honour, as there may be no reflection upon his Justice or Holiness.

And so much may suffice to have been spoken to that Objection.

*Obj.* 2. In other Scriptures God is said to harden the heart: So *Exod.* 7. 13. he is said to have *hardened Pharaoh's heart*, and often afterwards in that Book: So *Exod.* 14. 17. he is said to have hardened the hearts of the *Egyptians*. And *Isa.* 63. 17. God's People expostulate with him saying, *Why hast thou hardened our hearts from thy fear?*

A. But

A. But these places must not be so understood, as if God did infuse any hardness into man's heart : He hardens the hearts of men only by leaving them to the hardness of their own hearts, and by suffering them to harden their hearts more, or by denying them that softening Grace which he is not bound to give them, but may justly withhold from them if he pleases, especially when abused. 'Tis true, the Providence of God proposeth such things to them, or casteth such things in their way, upon occasion whereof their hearts are hardened; but however that hardness is neither from God, nor from the things which his Providence lays before them, but from themselves, from the corruption and naughtiness of their hearts. If their hearts were good, none of those things would do them any hurt, or be as much as an occasion of hardening their hearts. A wicked heart is the worse for every thing, and is apt to turn, not only things that are of an indifferent nature in themselves, neither good nor bad, but even the best things into sin.

And so much also to that Objection.

Obj. 3. But we read *Rom. i. 28.* that God gave over the Gentiles to a reprobate mind, to do those things that are not convenient. And of the Adherents and Complices  
of



of Antichrist, the Apostle saith, that God would *send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lye*, 2 Theff. 2. 11.

A. The Answer to this Objection is easily framed out of what hath been said to the former Objections. As for the first of the Scriptures alledged, the Answer to the Objection taken from it, is clearly intimated in the words of the Text; 'tis said that *God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do things that are not convenient*. He did not by infusion of any malignity or ill quality into them, make their minds reprobate; he did not urge or put them on to do things that were not convenient, but only gave them over to a reprobate mind, that is, gave them up to themselves, to the vicious and corrupt inclinations of their evil Hearts; he suffered them to take their own course, to add sin to sin, and through long custom in sin, to arrive at length to such a degree of senselessness and stupidity, as nothing troubled them or disquieted them, or gave check to them. So then the cause of all this their sad improvement in sin, and of their coming up at last to such a pitch of wickedness, was wholly from themselves, from the corruption of their own hearts. God only left them, and he not interposing to restrain them, they ran on of their own accord from one degree of sin to another,  
till

till at length they had sinned away all sense of sin, and extinguished, in great measure, the common Notions of Good and Evil in themselves, so as now they stuck at nothing: Natural Conscience no longer did its office in checking them for sin; they did what they would without remorse or gainsaying, without opposition or reluctancy from any better principle within them. It must be granted, this was not the case of all the *Gentiles*, some of them, many of them, had not so far advanced in sin; but this was the deplorable condition of multitudes among them.

And so at length I come to make some Application, which was the 5th. and last thing to be done.

*Use 1.* Seeing God hath such wise, holy, and gracious ends in tempting or trying his Children; and seeing the advantages thence redounding to them are such, so many, and so great, let no Child of God be unwilling to submit to God's Discipline, and come under his methods for doing him good; though the trials which the wisdom of God judgeth expedient to exercise you with should be very sore and grievous, very tedious and irksome to flesh and blood, and very hard to be undergone; though they should be of an extraordinary nature, and such as God very rarely exerciseth any  
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of his People with ; yet should the design of God in them, the gracious ends he aims at, and the benefit which you are sure to receive by them, reconcile you to them, and work in you a ready compliance with, and chearful submission to the good Pleasure of God. The Apostle would have us *count it all joy*, that is, matter of greatest, of highest joy, *when we fall into divers temptations* ; and this upon account of the singular benefits and spiritual advantages which we shall reap thereby. What say you to this ? Can you bring your heart to stand thus affected towards your forest trials ? Doth the prospect of the spiritual benefits that shall accrue to your Soul from them, make them welcome to you, or, at least, cure your prejudice against them, and work off that natural averseness of your heart from them, which makes you shrink back and look another way when they are making towards you ? Alas ! how far are we all from this holy frame of Spirit which St. *James* recommends to us ! Instead of counting it all joy, we count it all sorrow when we are likely to fall into Temptation ; we take on, wring our hands, and lament our condition as if we were undone, when any trial is in view, and especially when it comes near us. Though this great distemper be hard to be removed, yet there are two sovereign remedies, which if we had them,

them, and could apply them as we ought, would certainly cure us of it; and they are no other than those which I have just now been speaking of.

1. An high prizing and valuation of Spiritual things, particularly of that Grace, knowledge of our selves, and acquaintance with our selves, experience in Heavenly things, and other advantages for our Souls, which might be gained by our trials.

2. A firm and stedfast perswasion that our trials would certainly be thus advantageous to us in the issue: that we should be many ways gainers by them, and lose nothing by them but our dross. If these two things were thoroughly wrought into our Souls, and fixed there; if Spiritual things were in highest esteem with us, so as we could be content to purchase them at any rate, to undergo any thing upon condition we might obtain them: And if we were moreover thoroughly persuaded, that these better and more excellent things were to be attained by our trials, and that our improvement in these things would certainly be the issue of them, then would trials be welcome and acceptable to us, then would we chearfully entertain them, and go near to come up to St. James's his pitch, of *counting it all joy when we fall into divers temptations*. But we are greatly deficient in both these, and that makes us so much afraid of trials,



and so unwilling to hear of them. We have a low and mean esteem of Heavenly things, and prefer our ease before them; we have not that value for them, as to make us willing to suffer any thing, or to undergo any hardship to procure them. And then again, we do not really believe that we shall be such gainers by our trials: If we have some small esteem for Heavenly things, we have little expectation that our trials will much forward us towards the attainment of them. We rather say in our hearts, and it may be too often utter it also with our tongues, That such or such a trial can never bring any advantage to us, and that we might rather have expected to receive good from any other Afflictions, than from that which God thought fit to exercise us with.

*Use 2.* Seeing God hath such wise, holy, and gracious ends in the trials wherewith he exerciseth his Children, Be careful both to improve all your trials, and to observe the issues of them, what you gain by them, and how it pleaseth God to make them beneficial to you.

1. Be careful to improve them. For though God will be sure to do us all that good by them which he designed and intended, (for his purposes never fail to take effect) yet for the furthering thereof, our own endeavours are required. We must



not think that we may sit still, and let God alone to do us good by our trials. It is incumbent on us to consider what Spiritual improvement may be made of them, and accordingly to apply our selves to make the most of them for our Souls advantage. There is here a great neglect in most People ; in their Afflictions they bend all their thoughts to contrive how they may get out of them most easily and speedily, but take no care to improve them ; if they can be rid of them, that is all they look after, but the fruit of them is that which they least concern themselves with.

2. Be careful to observe the issues of your trials, and what Spiritual benefit redounds to you from them. To be able to say, Thus and thus hath God done me good by my trials ; I am sensible that I have received such and such considerable advantages to my Soul by them ; is a great and very desirable thing.

For 1. It helps us to look back upon our past trials without regret or inward displeasure at God's Providence ; it makes us acquiesce and rest well satisfied in what He hath done ; yea, it enables us to reflect with thankfulness upon those dispensations which for the present were most grievous to us.

2. It ever after encourageth us to bear other trials when they come, with that quietness and patience, with that evenness and calmness of Spirit, which becomes Christians, and to expect the like good Effects and Issues of them.

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## The Second Sermon.

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### GEN. XXII. 2.

*And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering, upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.*

**I**T now follows that I speak of the Third thing before mentioned, the Matter of the Temptation, in those words, *Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering, upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.* Moriah was the name of the Mountain in which the Threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite was, where *David* offered Burnt-offerings and Peace-offerings after that God had been provoked by his Numbring the People; and where *Solomon* afterwards builded the Temple. Wherefore some have thought, <sup>2 Chron.</sup> <sup>3. 1.</sup> That God long before enjoyning *Abraham*

to Offer up his Son in that very place, did therefore appoint him to do it there, rather than any where else because it was the place which in after-times he intended to make the fixed Seat of his publick worship; so that *Abraham's* Sacrificing there, did, as it were, handsel and in a manner Consecrate the place for the Service of God in future Ages. Whether there were any such Mystery intended in *Abraham's* being commanded to Offer up his Son there, I cannot say; but whether there were or no, 'tis a very remarkable thing, that in the same place, and upon the same plat of ground, so many hundred years after, *David* should Offer Sacrifice, and *Solomon's* Temple should be raised. But this by the way. *Abraham* is here Commanded to get him into the Land of *Moriah*; so it seems the Countrey adjoyning was from the Mount *Moriah* called. This Countrey was well known to *Abraham* before by that name; for God bids him go thither as unto a place which he knew. But whereas there were divers Hills in that Countrey, *Abraham* knew not on which of them he was to Sacrifice his Son until he came thither, or at least till he came near the place; for God had only commanded him to get him into the Land of *Moriah*, and to offer up his Son upon one of the Mountains which he should tell him of; and so accordingly 'tis said, v. 4. that  
when

when he had gone three days journey, he lift up his eyes, and saw the place afar off: Then, and not till then, did God make known to him the particular place where he was required to offer up his Son. But to come a little nearer the matter; there are here two things which I shall consider and briefly speak unto: The consistency of this Command with the Justice of God; And the greatness of *Abraham's* trial therein. As to the first of these, That God might justly require such a Sacrifice to be offered up unto him, cannot be denied by any man that acknowledgeth the Supreme and Absolute Dominion and Sovereignty that God hath over his Creatures. He gave them all their Being, and may without any injury take it away again at his pleasure; and take it away in what manner, and by what instruments he pleaseth. If man had never sinned, if he had still continued in the estate of his primitive Innocence and Integrity, yet God was no more obliged to continue and uphold him in his Being, than he was to give him a Being. 'Tis true he could not justly inflict any thing on him in way of punishment, unless he had first sinned; for punishment relates to sin, and is unjust where there hath been no offence. But if God, not intending to Punish, but only to shew his Power, or exercise his Dominion and Sovereignty over the work  
of



of his hands, should take away the Life of his innocent Creature, he should in that action do his Creature no wrong, unless in case he hath by some Promise freely obliged himself to continue him in Being. But now man having sinned, and thereby made himself obnoxious to his Justice, Who can rationally question but that he may take away the Life of any man? But here two things may be Objected.

1. It may be said, That the Offering of Human Sacrifices is that which God hath declared himself highly offended with, as may be seen *Psal.* 106. 37, 38. *Jer.* 7. 31. and in divers other places. To this I Answer,

1. That in those and other places 'tis said, they Sacrificed their Children to Idols, and to Devils, which was an high aggravation of their sin.

2. Though in other places God hath declared that he would not be so worshipped, yet if he had thought fit to require such Sacrifices to be ordinarily offered to him, he might very justly have done it; for he hath power to determine the Circumstances of his Worship as he pleaseth, and he that shall say otherwise, 1. Must necessarily entrench upon the Sovereignty of God. 2. He would thereby make this Command given unto *Abraham* to be unjust. 3. This was an extraordinary and singular Command  
laid

laid upon *Abraham*, and therefore though else he would not ordinarily be so worshipped, yet he reserved a Prerogative to himself still, according to which he acted in this extraordinary Injunction laid upon *Abraham*. And so much to that first Objection.

2. It may be Objected, That this seems to be an act of Cruelty and Unnaturalness in *Abraham*, thus to take away the Life of his own Child.

A. To have done it as the Idolatrous *Jews* and the *Heathens* did, to have done it without a Command, had been Cruel and Unnatural; but the express Command of God alters the whole nature of the thing, and makes that to be an high act of Obedience and Self-denial, which without such a Command had been Unnatural and Barbarous. God hath indeed planted natural affections in Parents towards their Children, but their affections which he hath put into them must be in subjection to God, yeilding, stooping, and giving way to his Commands and Providence. Where his good pleasure once appears, there natural affection must not have a word to say against it, but silently and humbly submit.

So we have seen, that 'twas neither unjust in God to command *Abraham* to offer up his Son, nor cruel or unnatural in *Abraham* to yeild Obedience to that Command.

I come now to shew how great a trial this was to *Abraham*, which was the second thing to be spoken to. Something hath already been said concerning it, when I spake to the first thing in the Text, the circumstance of time, when God thus Tempted *Abraham*. To be required to Sacrifice his Son *Isaac* immediately after that he had been commanded to dismiss *Ishmael*; and after God had told him that in *Isaac* his Seed should be called, and that in him, in his Offspring, and not in *Ishmael's*, he must expect the fulfilling of that great Promise, That *in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed*; I say, immediately after this to be required to Offer up *Isaac* for a Burnt-offering, might seem to overthrow all that God had said, and to make the fulfilling of the Promise to be impossible, and consequently to make the Promise it self utterly void and of none effect. But besides this circumstance of the time when *Abraham* was thus tempted, there are divers other things that manifest the greatness of this trial. There is indeed scarce any thing to be found among all the circumstances of this trial, which doth not contribute something towards the greatning of it. The several things considerable in it are these, The matter of the Sacrifice to be offered: The Minister or Priest by whom it was to be offered: The kind

kind of Sacrifice enjoined ; And the place where what was enjoined must be put in execution.

1. The matter of the Sacrifice was *Isaac* his Son ; and him not one Son among many , but his only Son , now that *Ishmael* was by God's special Command sent away ; and his only Son whom he loved, whom he most dearly and tenderly loved, and that upon all accounts that might endear a Son to the Father.

1. He was both his only Son, and his only Child ; by *Sarah* his Wife he had no other.

2. He was the Son of their old Age, a Child long waited for, and Prayed for, no doubt, and at last given them, when in respect of their great Age they were hopeless of Children.

3. It was the Son of the Promise, the Son in and with whom God promised to establish his Covenant with *Abraham* ; the Son from whom He was to descend in whom all the Families of the Earth were to be Blessed.

4. A most Dutiful and Obedient Son, as in the sequel of this History will appear. Now to part with such a Son, and in such a manner to have him taken away, and to be deprived of him, not by a natural, but by a violent Death ; to have him Killed and  
made

made a Sacrifice ; How great a trial was this !

2. The Priest or Minister by whom this Sacrifice was to be offered up to God, was the Father himself. If God had only commanded that he should have been offered in Sacrifice by any other hand, and if only *Abraham's* consent thereunto had been required, it had been a sore trial ; but how much more when the Father himself was commanded to Sacrifice his Son , when he must do it with his own hand ?

3. The kind of Sacrifice enjoyed did further add to *Abraham's* trial. He must offer his Son for a Burnt-offering : In which kind of Sacrifices these things were required : First, the Sacrifice must be Killed, then it must be cut in pieces, and lastly, it must be laid upon the Altar and burnt till it were wholly consum'd. Now how grievous a thing was this, that the Father himself should with his own hand kill his Son, and then cut his dead Body in pieces, and burn it to Ashes ! To have been only the Spectator of all this done by another, had been a great trial ; How much greater then, when the Father must be not the Spectator, but the Actor !

4. And



4. And lastly, The place where *Abraham* was commanded to offer this strange Sacrifice, did yet further heighten his trial. It was on an Hill in the land of *Moriah*, which was a great way off from the place of *Abraham's* present habitation; he came not to be in view of the place till the third day of his Journey. Now to be so long musing on what he was to do unto his Son, and to have his Son that was to be Sacrificed ever before his eyes, and in his thoughts all that long Journey, was no small addition to the greatness of this his trial. If he had been enjoined to do it immediately, so as there might have been no time for rolling it in his mind, and afflicting himself with the thoughts of it before he was to put the Command of God in execution, it might have been less grievous to him, than to be so long pondering in his mind a thing so frightful and amazing, and that seemed to offer such violence to natural affection.

Thus I have shewed how great a trial this was upon all accounts, in all the circumstances of it, which way soever we look, and whatsoever we consider in it. Hence divers things may be observed.

*Obs.* 1. That God may sometimes exercise his Children that are dearest to him with sore trials, and with trials of an unusual and extraordinary nature. Though  
*Abraham*

Gen. 18.  
31.

Job 1. 8.

*Abraham was the friend of God, Isa. 41. 8. the father of the faithful, Rom 4. 11. A man who had such interest in the favour of God, that he had prevailed with him in Prayer for the rescuing of so filthy and abominable a place as Sodom from destruction, if but ten righteous Persons could have been found in it: Yet God here tries him in so strange a manner, that we can hardly read or hear it without horror and astonishment. So though Job had the testimony of*

*God himself, that there was none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feared God and eschewed evil; yet how sore were his trials? Though, I grant, of a far different nature from that of Abraham. And those eminent and heroick Persons mentioned Heb. 11. 36, 37. Of whom the world was not worthy; they had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, of bonds and imprisonment; they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tempted, they were slain with the sword, they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented. These trials also were indeed of another nature, and as different from that of Abraham; as Job's were. But however by these signal instances, we see that in various ways and several kinds God exerciseth his dearest Children oftentimes with trials of an extraordinary nature. The reasons and ends of this dispensation are these among others.*

I. That

1. That God may by those extraordinary trials draw forth and discover the Graces which he hath wrought in them.

2. That by exercise he may further improve and increase those Graces in them.

3. That by their gracious deportment under their trials, he may make them rare patterns and examples to others for their imitation. Thus for all these several ends was *Abraham's* trial; and for the same ends were *Job's* trials, although they were of another kind.

4. That he may honour them by their being called forth and singl'd out to bear witness to his Truth, and by their patient, constant, and undaunted sufferings for it, to confirm and strengthen, settle and establish others in the belief and profession of it. And to these ends were the trials of those Worthies in the Eleventh of the *Hebrews*, last mentioned.

The Uses of this point may be these.

1. If God doth sometimes exercise his dearest Children with sore trials, and trials of an unusual and extraordinary nature, then let none upon account of their interest in God's favour, look upon themselves as secured against such trials, and exempted from them. If neither *Abraham*, nor *Job*, nor those eminent Saints in the *Hebrews*, were exempted from them, Who are you, or Whom do you take your self to be, that you

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should

Should think your self secur'd against them?

2. Judge not others rashly; censure them not as such as belong not to God, merely upon the account of the greatness or extraordinary nature of their trials. These things are such as God may exercise the best of men, the dearest of his Children, with: And mostly he calls forth such, above others, to exercise them in an extraordinary manner; either because he hath already bestowed on them a greater measure of Grace to bear such trials, and answer his designs in them, or because by them he intends the furbishing and brightning, the strengthening and improvement of his Graces in them.

3. Seeing God sometimes exerciseth his own Children, and such among them as he loveth most, with great trials, and trials of an extraordinary nature; let all, even the best men, the most sound and sincere Christians, whatever measures of Grace they have attained, whatever interest they make account they have in God's Favour, be still in a readiness to entertain trials, trials of all sizes and sorts, even great and sore trials, trials of an unusual and extraordinary nature, as well as those that are common and ordinary, seeing they are no more secured against them, or exempted from them, than other men; yea, seeing the better they are, the stronger, the more  
able



able to bear and improve such trials, the more likely they are to be exercised with them, 'tis most safe that they should be always prepared for them. And to the end they may be so :

1. They must be ever watchful over themselves, and careful to keep themselves free from the guilt of all wilful and presumptuous sins; their sins, especially presumptuous sins, put a sting into their sufferings. Most sad therefore will their condition be, who when sore trials come, shall be found indulging themselves in sin, or lying under the guilt of any former enormities not repented of; but happy are they who are found *watching and keeping their garments.* Rev. 16.  
Trials never come amiss to such as these. 15.

2. They must give themselves much unto Prayer. The more any man prays, the fitter will he be to entertain all sorts of Providences. Nothing that can befall a man will much surprize him or discompose him, if he be one whose constant practice 'tis to pray much, and if trials, whatsoever they be, or whensoever they come, can never find him out of that course. But unto profane and prayerless People, Oh, how surprizing and dreadful will great trials be, when suddenly they fall upon them as an armed man, and they are not in a posture to entertain them ! These two, Watching and Prayer, our Saviour hath recommend-



Mark 13.  
33.

ed to us as the best preparatives for whatever evils may be coming upon us.

So much touching that Observation.

*Obs. 2.* A second Observation may be this ; That God sometimes tries his Children in that which is most dear to them, and lies nearest their hearts. So he dealt with *Abraham* ; scarce any thing in all the world was dearer to him than *Isaac* ; and yet *Isaac* is commanded to be Sacrificed. And so he dealt with *Jacob* ; of all his Children none was so dear to him as *Joseph* ; and yet amongst all his Sons *Joseph* must be pitched on to be sold to the *Ismaelites*, and after that to the *Egyptians* ; and the matter in the meantime is so represented by his Brethren, as if a wild Beast had torn him in pieces, and devoured him, to the unspeakable anguish and heart-breaking of his Father, who so dearly loved him. So questionless there was nothing dearer to *Jephthah* than his Daughter and only Child, and yet she must be the matter of that sad trial which God saw good to exercise him with. The reasons of which dispensation are principally these Three :

Judg. 11.  
34, 35.

1. Sometimes God sees in his People an excess of affection towards that thing which is so dear to them ; he takes notice that they love it inordinately, and set their hearts too much upon it ; for the cure of which distemper, he either rends away that

that thing from them, or by some severe Providence or other imbitters it to them.

2. God tries his People in what is dearest to them, because they are there most tender and sensible, and so their trials will work most kindly and effectually upon them. If he should open another Vein, they would scarce bleed, and so no good would be done upon them.

3. God tries them in what is dearest to them, that the strength and lustre of their Faith, Patience, Self denial, and other Graces, may be more conspicuous, as here in *Abraham's* case.

The only Uses which I shall make of this Observation are,

1. To call upon all God's People to look out for, and expect trials in what is dearest to them; for there are they most likely to meet with them.

2. To caution them to beware that they suffer not any thing in this world to lye too near their hearts, or to gain too great an interest in their love and affections. For as nothing is surer than that they shall meet with some affliction in that very thing; so any affliction that shall touch them in so tender a part, will be so much the more grievous to them.

*Obs.* 3. A Third Observation may be, That where God hath been pleased to bestow any Grace in an eminent degree, he

2 Kings  
18. 5.

finds a time to draw it forth and act it : God had given an extraordinary measure of Faith to *Abraham*, and here he gives an occasion of acting it to the full. So he had given *Job* an high degree of Patience ; and he laid those afflictions on him in his Estate, his Children, and his Body, as gave him an occasion of using all that he had received. He had wrought in *Hezekiah's* heart an eminent degree of holy trust and confidence in God, insomuch that 'tis said of him, *That he trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so that after him was none like him, among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him ;* and this Grace also he exercised in an extraordinary manner, when *Senacherib* King of *Assyria* sent *Rabshekeh* with a puissant and formidable Army against *Jerusalem*, threatening him and his People with the utmost extremities of War, unless they should come forth and submit themselves to him as Conqueror, *2 Chron. 32. Isa. 36.* and the 37th.

Now God is thus pleased to find a time to draw forth and exercise those eminent Graces which he hath wrought in any of his ; partly, that he himself may not lose the honour of that Grace which he hath bestowed on them ; and partly, that they may not lose either the honour or comfort of it.

Wherefore to make no other Application of this point, let it be your care to endeavour

deavour to grow in Grace, and to get still greater measures of it; and let God alone to offer occasions, and give you opportunities of acting it.

Thus I have done with the first thing in this History, God's Command laid upon *Abraham* to offer up his Son for a Burnt-offering, in the first and second Verses of the Chapter. Now follows *Abraham's* Obedience thereunto, from thence to the end of the Tenth Verse. In which we have;

1. His addressing himself to go towards the place where he was commanded to offer up his Son, in the Third and Fourth Verses.

2. His dismissing his Servants, or at least his leaving them behind him when he came near to the place in the Fifth Verse.

3. His laying the Wood for the Burnt-offering on his Son, and his taking the Fire in his hand, and a Knife; and the dialogue between the Father and the Son upon occasion thereof; in the Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Verses.

4. *Abraham's* preparing and ordering all things for offering up his Son, in the Ninth Verse.

5. His attempting to put the Command of God in execution, by sacrificing his Son, Verse the Tenth. Of these in order.

The first thing is, his addressing himself to go to the place where he was to offer up



his Son, in the third and fourth Verses; *And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and clave the wood for the burnt-offering; and rose up, and went unto the place which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lift up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.* That which in these words is most remarkable, is *Abraham's* speedy compliance with the command of God: 'Tis said, that having been commanded to go to the Land of *Moriah*, and offer his Son for a Burnt-offering, *he rose up early in the morning* to address himself thereunto; the very next morning after that he had received the command from God, as 'tis probable. 'Tis not to be doubted, but that as the command was strange and extraordinary, so God was pleased to give *Abraham* most clear and full satisfaction concerning his good pleasure therein; God did, no doubt, make it out to him beyond all exception, that it was he himself that appeared to him, and that it was his own express injunction, and peremptory command to him that he should Sacrifice his Son. This was so clearly revealed to him, that there was no place for hesitation or doubting: Else the strange and extraordinary nature of the command could not but have occasioned many scruples, jealousies, and fears in his mind, lest it might be a delusion,



lusion, and lest the enemy of Souls might have taken upon him thus to personate God. But he being fully satisfied that there was no such imposture, neither disputes the Command nor the Author of it, but immediately applies himself to contrive the putting of it in execution. And to the end that nothing might hinder him therein, he imparted it not to his servants, nor to *Isaac* himself, till he was come to the place where he was to be Sacrificed, as we shall see afterwards.

And whereas *Sarah* his Wife, and *Isaac's* Mother, seems to have been then alive, (for we read of her Death and Burial in the next Chapter) it doth not appear that he acquainted her with it, but kept it within his own breast; if *Sarah* had known it, 'tis likely that her tender and motherly affection towards her Son, might have made such vehement opposition against it, as might have created much trouble and disturbance to *Abraham*, and have been a great hinderance to him in the performance of what was enjoined him. Wherefore, perhaps, he thought that to have advised with *Sarah* in this case, had been but to consult with flesh and blood, and to expose himself to such temptations as would make a difficult duty much more difficult. And indeed so often it is, that our consulting with others in matters of clear and unquestionable duty, doth

doth but lay rubs in our way, and many times weaken our good resolutions, and draw us off from our duty.

Now from the example of *Abraham* in this matter, we may also learn, speedily to address our selves to the performance of our duty when 'tis once made known unto us. In so hard a service *Abraham* demurs not, he consults not with flesh and blood, he excepts not against the strangeness and difficulty of what was enjoined him, he quarrels not with the command of God, he opposeth not his own carnal wisdom or natural affection against the will and good pleasure of God, but immediately sets himself to the performance of what was now by the command of God made his duty, though such a duty as seemed to offer violence to Nature it self. How widely different is our disposition from this of *Abraham*! How do we dispute the commands of God whenever they are such as cross the corrupt inclinations of our hearts! How many artifices and devices do we invent and frame to free our selves from the obligation of them! Or if by no arts we can avoid or decline the force of them, how slowly do we come on to yield Obedience to them! How many demurs and procrastinations, how many shiftings off and delayings are there, before we can be prevailed with to buckle to our duty! 'Tis true,

true in matters of a doubtful nature, consultation and deliberation are needful ; there we must take heed that precipitancy and hastiness do not hurry us on to act, before we are sufficiently satisfied concerning our duty : But where our duty is fully discovered and made out to us, there is then no place for deliberation, unless how we may best, most speedily, and effectually discharge it, *Abraham* having received an express command to Sacrifice his Son, deliberates not whether or no he should put in execution what God had enjoined him ; but being fully bent, and unalterably resolved to put the command of God in execution, all his thoughts are taken up in contriving how he might do it most speedily, and how he might manage the business so as nothing might either divert him from his purpose, or hinder him. Could we be as quick and speedy in the performance of our known duty, the advantages thereof would be divers and considerable.

I. Such Obedience would be much more acceptable to God, than when we come on to the performance of our duty by such slow and lingring paces. That which the Moralist saith in another case, is most true here, *Qui multum deliberavit diu noluit*. Our long demurring and deliberating about the performance of a known duty, our long delaying it, and putting it off, is a demonstration

Pfal. 40.  
7, 8.

2 Chron.  
17. 16.

Isa. 6. 8.

tion of our unwillingness, and shews we have no great mind to it. And this is a temper which God cannot endure. He loves and looks after readines of mind, forwardness, chearfulness, and alacrity in all our services. Then are we in that frame wherein he takes delight, when upon the first discovery of our duty unto us, we can say with our Saviour, *Lo I come, I delight to do thy will, O God, thy law is within my heart.* When with *Amaziah the Son of Zichri*, we do willingly offer our selves to be serviceable to him; when God no sooner saith, *Whom shall I send, and who will go for us in this or that errand?* But we presently answer with the Prophet *Isaiah*, after his mouth had been touch'd with a coal from the Altar, *Here am I, send me.*

2. Such ready and speedy Obedience would be much more easie and comfortable to us. For by our putting off and delaying the performance of a known duty, we sundry ways encumber our selves, and clog our selves with impediments and difficulties.

1. By our delays, the present strength of our resolutions, and warmth of our hearts, is abated and impaired. We are for the present earnestly bent to the performance of our duty, our resolutions are strong and vigorous; but after a while the edge and force of our resolutions is taken off, and we



we come to be very indifferent. At first our hearts are warm, and our affections are raised ; but anon, that season being not improved, our hearts grow cold, and our affections fall, and such a dulness and flatness seizes on them, as they afford us no furtherance towards the discharge of our duty. He that hath not some experience of these things, hath little acquaintance with himself.

2. When we speedily apply our selves to the performance of our duty, we prevent temptations to hinder us, which by our delays we are sure to meet with. Temptations from within us, through the corruption and deceitfulness of our own hearts ; temptations from without us, partly from *Satan*, and partly from the world.

3. By our speedy Obedience we improve the present opportunity thereof, which many times is either the only, or the fittest opportunity. How often by our delays do we lose an opportunity for the performance of our duty, and never meet with another ! An opportunity is irrecoverably lost once for all. Again, How easily might you have done your duty, if you had set about it when you were first convinced of your obligation thereunto ? But that opportunity being let slip, and the performance of your duty put off, with how much uneasiness and trouble is it afterwards done,



done, if done at all! Well then, Doth God at any time clearly convince you of your duty? Doth he make you see what in this or that kind he requires of you, by letting in a full and broad light into your Soul, so as you cannot shut your eyes against it? And doth he moreover work in you strong resolutions to put in practice what you apprehend to be your duty? And doth he add wings to your resolutions by warming and enlarging your heart, by quickning and raising your affections? O then get up and be doing, set about your duty immediately while you have these advantages, before your convictions be darkned, your resolutions be weakned, your heart grow cold, and your affections fall; before temptations come in, before the world, the flesh, and the devil interpose to cast a damp upon your spirit, to cast rubs in your way, and to take you off from your duty.

So I go on to the next thing in the Text, *Abraham's dismissing his Servants*, or at least his leaving them behind him when he came near to the place where he was to Sacrifice his Son, verse 5. and *Abraham said unto the young men, Abide you here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.* Here two things are to be enquired into; to wit, why  
*Abraham*

*Abraham* left his Servants behind him, and took them not along with him when he was to Sacrifice his Son; and in what sense *Abraham* was to be understood when he said, *I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.* As for the former of these, why did *Abraham* leave his Servants behind him when he was to Sacrifice his Son? His Servants, as some may think, might have been helpful and assistant to him, in carrying the Wood, and binding his Son, and setting things in order for Sacrificing him.

I Answer, *Abraham*, no doubt, left his Servants behind him, that they might not hinder him in the service which he had undertaken. Questionless he apprehended they were more likely to hinder him, than to afford any furtherance to him; when it should appear to them that *Abraham* intended to Sacrifice his Son, they might possibly interpose, dissuading him from it, or dissuading *Isaac* from consenting and submitting thereunto; and if persuasions would not prevail, they might perhaps in such an extraordinary case think themselves obliged to rescue *Isaac* from death by force; for 'tis a question whether any thing that *Abraham* could say would satisfy them touching the command of God, and a warrant or commission from Heaven for this strange  
and

and extraordinary action. Besides, we know not but that God himself might for these reasons order him to leave his Servants behind him.

Now from this his wise conduct and prudent care to free himself from what might hinder him in the performance of his duty, we are also admonished to use the like Providence: When we address our selves to the performance of our duty, we should consider before hand what is likely to hinder us, what may cool our zeal, or weaken our resolutions; what may causlessly dishearten or discourage us, and beat us off from our duty, and make the best provision we can against all such impediments, and by a wise forecast free and deliver our selves, as much as in us lies, from whatsoever may either withhold us from, or incumber and clog us in the discharge of our duty. And there are three things, the consideration whereof should make us the more provident and careful this way.

1. We shall hereby shew, that our hearts are set upon the performance of our duty, and that we attend and mind it seriously and earnestly. Thus earthly-minded men, whose hearts are set upon the world, forecast their business, and provide against whatever may hinder them in the pursuit of the world. And thus voluptuous men, who addict themselves to sensual enjoyments,

ments, and the pleasures of sin, *make provision for the flesh*, as the Apostle's phrase is *Rom. 13. 14.* They carefully look out and provide what may best further them in the enjoyment of their sensual delights; and they as carefully provide against, and avoid whatsoever may give check to their pleasures; and all this because their hearts are set upon them, and eagerly bent after them. If we be as careful and as provident in casting off, and removing out of the way, in declining and avoiding what may probably slack our pace, and hinder us in the performance of our duty, we shall hereby satisfy our selves, and demonstrate to others, that we seriously mind the matters of our duty, that our hearts are set upon them, and that we make Religion our business.

2. To make us the more careful to provide against, and avoid whatsoever may be an hinderance to us in the performance of our duty, let us consider that we have hinderances enough within us from the evil frame of our corrupt hearts, from our natural slothfulness, backwardness, and indisposition to what is good, though there were nothing without to hinder us. Though we could perfectly free our selves from all impediments without, yet our inward corruption would sufficiently clog and incumber us; that would be a continual burthen and heavy weight



to stop our course, and retard our motion.

3. When we have done all we can, and used our utmost diligence to provide against, prevent, and remove whatsoever we can foresee may hinder us in the performance of our duty; we shall never be wholly freed from all impediments; we can never foresee and provide against all that may hinder us; the Devil and the World will be ever and anon casting in such obstacles as we thought not of, and laying such rubs in our way, as our greatest circumspection and most exact care could never foresee or prevent; wherefore we are so much the more concerned to make the best provision we can against whatever we can foresee may hinder us. If we can never be freed from all impediments, it will be our wisdom to lessen the number of them as much as we can; the fewer we have, the more easy will our Obedience be, and the more nimbly and chearfully shall we go on with our work.

And this may suffice to have been spoken upon occasion of *Abraham's* leaving his Servants behind him, lest they might hinder him in the service in which he was engaged.

Now let us all reflect upon our selves, and put the question to our own hearts, Whether we have been careful to make use  
of



of *Abraham's* Providence in quitting and dismissing, in casting off and laying aside whatever might prove an hinderance to us in the discharge of our duty? Alas! Have we not rather voluntarily sought out sinful divertisements, and many times wilfully exposed our selves to those temptations which we could not but foresee would draw us off from our business, and make us neglect our duty? Have we not been glad when any thing came in our way to take us off from it? Have not temptations when they offered themselves; been welcome and acceptable to us? Instead of casting aside and throwing off what might retard or stop us in the course of our duty, Have we not voluntarily loaded and incumbered our selves with those things to hinder us, which we might have been rid off if we would?

Again, when our duty lay clear and plain before us, so as no question could be made of it, Have we not consulted with flesh and blood? Have we not betaken our selves to them for counsel and advice, who would be sure to pervert us and draw us aside; who would make use of all arguments, persuasions and allurements to turn us out of the right way?

And lastly, whereas *Abraham*, when he was to worship God, was careful to dismiss what might distract or hinder him, Have

we who are this day come to wait on God in his House, left the world behind us? Have we taken pains to empty our hearts of our earthly business, and the cares and distractions of the world? Or rather, are not many of us come hither with our hearts so full of these things, that we have no room there for better things? Doth not the world, even now, so take up our minds and imploy our thoughts, so incumber and discompose us, so disturb and disquiet us, as we have no liberty or freedom of spirit for the proper duties of this day and place?

But here a question may be moved, How *Abraham* alone, having none with him to assist him, could have any confidence that he should be able to Bind and Sacrifice his Son?

For 1. He had not as yet acquainted him with it, and knew not how he might resent so strange a thing in which his own Life was concerned.

2. As for *Abraham* himself, he was above an Hundred years old, and therefore it may well be presumed that his strength at that age was much impaired, whereas *Isaac* was now in the prime of his strength and vigor. Wherefore if *Abraham* should find him averse from complying with what he should propound to him, he had not strength to force him; he might easily  
resist

resist his Father, or run away from him.  
To all this I Answer,

1. That *Abraham*, questionless, had an high confidence touching his Son's tractableness and Obedience; he had so trained him up from his Childhood, so inured him to the yoke of Obedience from his tender years, and all along kept up such a reverence of his Parental Authority in his heart, that he made no doubt but that he could prevail with him in any thing that he should persuade him unto, the Son being well assured that such a Father would not put him upon any thing but what was fit for him to consent unto.

2. *Abraham* knew that he could make it out to his Son, that it was the command of God that he should offer him up to him for a Burnt-offering; and *Isaac* knew that so dear he was to his Father, and so tender was his Father's love and affection to him, that nothing but the Command of God could ever have engaged him to do it; yea, that the thing was so strange, and so much against Nature, that it could never have entred into his thoughts to attempt it, unless God had by a peremptory Command required it of him.

3. *Abraham* knew the heart of *Isaac* his Son to be thoroughly seasoned, and soundly principled with the fear of God, which would effectually incline and dispose him to sub-

mit to any thing that should appear unto him to be his duty.

4. And principally, *Abraham* was well assured that as God had engaged him in this difficult service, and inclined his own heart to comply with the command of God therein, so he would also carry him through it by framing his Son's heart to the like ready and chearful compliance with the command of God. Upon these or the like grounds it was, no doubt, that addressing himself to Sacrifice his Son, he left his Servants behind him, and took no care for any other help or assistance. Whence we may observe divers things.

As 1. That when God is pleased to call his People to undertake great and extraordinary services, he doth endue them with an extraordinary measure of holy trust and confidence in himself to enable them. They are often carried above themselves, and above all those discouragements which carnal wisdom may suggest, and strengthened to believe that he who hath set them a work and employed them, will not leave them nor forsake them, but assuredly be with them in those their undertakings which he hath engaged them in. Thus it was with *Abraham*, he might have been perplexed and disturbed with the consideration of the difficulty of the service he was put upon, and the obstructions he might meet



meet with: He might have questioned his own strength, whether he should not recoil and give back when he should be now in a readiness to stretch forth his hand to kill his Son; he might have questioned whether his natural affection might not be too strong for him, and whether or no when it came to the upshot he should ever endure to put that in execution which he had upon the command of God undertaken. He might also have questioned whether his Son would ever be persuaded to submit thereunto. With these, and other things of like nature, he might have been overpowered and born down. But God, who had imposed that command upon him, carried him above all these things, and made them all of no force to stop or hinder him in the pursuance of what he had undertaken. And thus we may find our selves oftentimes carried above all those fears and discouragements, the least of which are too strong for us when God leaves us to our selves. Which should teach us these two lessons:

(1.) In all our undertakings that are of any special importance or difficulty, to labour to be clearly and fully satisfied that we set not about what we enterprize, without God's warrant, to be sure that he hath engaged us therein, and that we run not on headlong before we know that we have our commission from him.



(2.) That being thus satisfied touching his call, we have our eyes still on him for that help and assistance upon all occasions, that is necessary to carry us through what by his order we have entered upon.

2. Another thing which we may hence observe is, That no difficulties should discourage us from going on where we know that we have God's warrant and authority to countenance and abet our undertakings; having his command or approbation, we have enough to oppose against a thousand discouragements. *Abraham* having a command from God, sticks at nothing, but on he goes against whatever difficulties might encounter him, or attempt to turn him aside out of the way of his duty.

3. We may further observe, That God hath the hearts of men in his hand, and frames them as he pleaseth, he turns them as *the rivers of water whithersoever he will*, as *Solomon* speaks, *Prov. 21. 1.* A great comfort and support to those who in matters of highest importance have to do with men of difficult and perverse tempers, especially when the present necessities and exigencies of their affairs are such as engage them to offer such things to them, or to request such things of them, as they know not how they will resent. It was, we may be sure, very much to the satisfaction and

and quieting of *Abraham's* spirit, that he knew God had the heart of his Son *Isaac* in his hand, and could mould and dispose it as he saw good; that though the matter which he was to lay before him was such as he might startle at, and look upon with the greatest averſation and abhorrence, yet he knew God could ſo deal with his heart, as that he ſhould moſt readily accord to it, and entertain it. Are you afraid how you ſhall ſpeed in your buſineſs with ſuch or ſuch a Perſon, on whoſe favour the ſucceſs of ſome weighty affair in which you are highly concerned, depends? Remember, God hath the hearts of all men in his hands, and they muſt and ſhall turn which way ſoever he ſhall incline them: Wherefore,

1. Look up to him who is the faſhioner and governor of hearts, to incline and diſpoſe the hearts of thoſe with whom your buſineſs lies, to do that which ſhall be moſt for your good. Be much in your addreſſes to God, and by Prayer often commend your affairs to his diſpoſal.

2. Walk in Obedience to him, as one that is waiting to find Grace in his eyes. Be careful in all things to pleaſe him.

3. Bring your heart, as near as you are able, to a perfect willingneſs to be at his diſpoſal as to the iſſue of what you are waiting  
on

on him for. So shall you be able quietly and  
securely to devolve your concernments up-  
on God, and to expect without distraction or  
thoughtfulness the event of them.

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## The Third Sermon.

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GEN. XXII. 5.

----- *I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.*

**S**O I come to the Second thing in this Verse to be inquired into, namely, In what sense *Abraham* was to be understood when he said, *I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.* *Abraham* went with a full purpose to Sacrifice his Son. Now this being his intention, and knowing nothing to the contrary but he must offer *Isaac* for a Burnt-offering, that is, kill him, cut him in pieces, and burn him to ashes, How could he truly say, *I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you?* Could *Isaac*, when he should no longer be, return with his Father? To say, as some have said, that *Abraham* spake contrary to his own thoughts and apprehensions, that is, that he told a lye to conceal his purpose from his Servants, were perhaps too much rashness. For though *Abraham* was not free from human frailties  
and

and infirmities, yet we should be tender of fastning the imputation of a lye upon so Eminent and Holy a Man, and not make him guilty thereof, if there be any fair way of absolving him from it.

Again, to say that he knew he should not Sacrifice his Son, and that when he should just stretch forth his hand to kill him, he should be taken off from doing it, and another Sacrifice be substituted in the room of *Isaac*, would be a groundless and false affirmation.

For 1. 'Tis evident from the History, that he knew not of any other Sacrifice than his Son, or that God had any other intentions than that he should actually Sacrifice *Isaac*, till he had stretched out his hand to kill him.

2. If he had had these thoughts before, his Obedience had not been so highly praiseworthy as the Scripture makes it to be ; for it had been no great matter for him to have made an offer at Sacrificing his Son, if he knew he should not do it, but that God would at last interpose to hinder him, and provide another Sacrifice.

Lastly, Neither can it be said, that he believed that *Isaac* being Sacrificed and burnt to ashes, God would restore him to life again, and raise him from the dead ; and that having this belief, he told his Servants that having worshipped, they would come again



again to them. For such a Faith he could not have, without a promise to ground it on, and God never promised to do that which he never intended, as by the event it appeared he did not. Besides, if he had had such a Faith, his Obedience, as hath been said in the other case before, would not have been so highly commendable. But then what can be said in behalf of *Abraham*, to free him from the guilt of having affirmed that which was contrary to his present thoughts and persuasions? I answer, there are Two ways by which men have endeavoured to clear him from that guilt.

1. Some say, his Tongue was over-ruled by God to speak that which God intended should be, though *Abraham* knew it not. But here it will be objected, That *Abraham* either understood and minded what he said, or he did not. If he understood and minded what he said, then the doubt still remains, How he could affirm that which he had no good grounds for affirming? If he was so over-ruled to speak what he did, as that he understood not, or minded not what he said, then what he said must rather be ascribed to God than to himself; to God, I say, who moved, guided, and over-ruled his tongue to speak that which God had fore-ordained, and therefore fore-saw should come to pass, though *Abraham* heeded not what

what he said, whether true or false ; and then his speech was scarce a rational action, he being rather passive than active therein. Which, I think, should not easily be admitted.

2. Others say, the speech of *Abraham* was figurative, the plural number by a *synecdoche* being put for the singular; so that *we will come again to you*, should import no more than, I, or one of us, will come again. And of this manner of speech, they say, there are other instances in Scripture; thus *John* 12. 4, 5. we read, that one of Christ's Disciples, *Judas* that betrayed him, said of *Mary's Ointment*, *Why was not this sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?* But *Matth.* 26. 8, 9. we read, That *when the disciples saw it, they had indignation and said, To what purpose is this waste? for this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.* Where by the Disciples, say they, we are to understand one of them; so likewise *Mark* 14. 4, 5.

Another instance we have *Luke* 23. 39. where we read that one of the Malefactors railed on Christ when he was crucified; whereas *Matth.* 27. 44. and *Mark* 15. 32. the same is said in the plural number, of them that were crucified with him: Which words must be understood of one of them by a *synecdoche*, of the plural number for the singular.

singular; for *Luke 23. 40.* 'tis expressly affirmed concerning one of the Thieves, that he rebuked the other for reviling Christ, so far was he from reviling him himself. By this figurative speech, not altogether unusual in Scripture, some think that *Abraham* may very fairly be defended from having told a lye, when he said, *we will go yonder and worship, and come again to you,* though he had no other thoughts at that time, but that *Isaac* must have been killed and burnt to ashes; and though he had no sufficient ground to believe, that being consumed in the fire, God would presently restore him to life again. *We will come again,* that is, one of us; as 'tis affirmed of the Disciples that they said, *to what purpose is this waste?* That is, one of them said so; and as 'tis affirmed of the Thieves, that they reviled Christ, that is, one of them reviled him.

Now though this be charitably said in *Abraham's* behalf, yet we must take heed that we make not an ill use of it. We may not plead his example to justify our selves in equivocations and mental-reservations: To frame our words and expressions so on purpose that we may be otherwise understood than we intend, reserving a secret meaning to our selves quite different from what our words imply, and what we would have the hearer understand; this is  
such

such a juggling as we most justly condemn in the Jesuits. And indeed, as I have at large shewed in handling another Scripture, 'tis no better than a lye; yea, 'tis one of the worst sort of lies; 'tis an artificial lye. Now the more of our contrivance and artifice there is in any sin, the more there is of the will, and the more there is of deliberation, which doth not a little aggravate it. Besides, the lye that hath most cunning and artifice in it, is most dangerous and pernicious to others: For who can secure himself against the mischief that awaits him, if he hath to do with Persons who by their equivocations make him believe one thing, when another, it may be the quite contrary, is intended? Persons of these principles and practices are unfit for the society of Mankind, 'tis not safe to live or converse with them. But while we cry out against these things in our adversaries, let us take care that we be not guilty of them our selves. It were well if the Jesuits were the only persons chargeable with this kind of lying. 'Tis to be feared that equivocations and mental-reservations are too much in use among Tradesmen in their Shops, and many others in their ordinary converse. 'Tis easy to observe how often many stick not to affirm and deny those things which can have no truth in them without the help of an equivocation or mental-reservation.

And



And though this art help to make up a sense that is true to themselves, yet 'tis a very lie to others. Let us all labour to be at the greatest distance from such deceitful arts and guileful practices. Let our words and our hearts ever accord, and let us ever account sincerity and truth in all our words and actions, the great ornament of our Profession. As for lying and equivocations, let's look upon them as the shame and reproach of our holy Profession, as things unworthy a Christian and a Man, as proceeding from the Devil who is a *Liar and the Father of it*, and as being most odious to God, and most contrary to his Nature, who is a God of Truth.

And so much concerning the Fifth Verse, and therein of *Abraham's* leaving his Servants behind him when he drew near to the place where he had been commanded to Sacrifice his Son, and of the sense of those his words to them, *I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.*

Now followeth his laying the Wood for the Burnt-offering on his Son, his taking the Fire in his hand, and a Knife, and the Dialogue between the Father and the Son upon that occasion, in the sixth, seventh, and eighth Verses.

In all which there are these Two things principally considerable; *Abraham's* Fortitude and Constancy, and the readiness and



fitness of his reply to his Son's demand,  
*Where the lamb for a burnt-offering was?*

As for the former of these, his Fortitude and Constancy; how admirable was it! Who but a Man of *Abraham's* heroick Spirit, a Man endued with that constancy, stedfastness, firmness of Resolution, and Fortitude which he had, could under his Circumstances have gone thorough with the discharge of his Duty as he did? To lay the Wood upon the Shoulders of his Innocent Son, wherewith he himself must presently be burnt to ashes; and to accompany his Son thus loaded, with the Knife in one hand to kill him, and the Fire in the other hand to consume his dead body; and then to hear his Son, as yet knowing nothing of all this, moving that innocent question, *Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt-offering?* How would it have broken the Spirit, and even have rent asunder the heart of another man! how would it have overcome him and transported him! Such inward meltings, and tender compassions, and rollings of Parental Bowels there would have been, as he would never have been able to go on with what he had undertaken. And yet all this did not so transport or discompose *Abraham*, but that on he goes still, and further he had gone, to the full execution of what was enjoined him, if God himself, who

who laid the Command on him, had not taken him off. Neither in the mean time was it want of natural affection or love to his Son, that he could thus manage this business. He loved his Son *Isaac* most dearly and tenderly ; but the fear and love of God was so great, and so predominant in his heart, that nothing could come in competition with it when God was to be Obeyed. O that we had more of the same fear and love of God in our hearts ! And, O that we had more of *Abraham's* constancy, firmness, and stedfastness of Resolution in what is good ! If we had, we would not suffer natural affection, and fond love, and worldly considerations, and carnal wisdom, and the suggestions of flesh and blood, and every poor trifle, to turn us aside out of God's way, or to interrupt us in our course of Obedience, and take us off from our Duty.

The second thing in these Verses most considerable, Is the readiness and fitness of *Abraham's* Reply to his Son's Question ; *Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering ?* saith *Isaac*. *My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering,* saith *Abraham*. Than which nothing could have been more fitly replied to *Isaac's* question : Though it was a quick and sudden answer, yet a better answer he could not have framed upon the greatest de-

liberation: And it was such an answer, as in the event proved strangely true, though in a way much beside *Abraham's* present thoughts or expectations. And therefore we may conclude, That there was much of God in it, moving him to give such an answer as he himself intended in a special and extraordinary manner to make good. Some Persons are endued with a presence of Spirit and Wisdom, whereby they are enabled to make quick and apposite replies to what is propounded to them. This must be acknowledged as a singular Gift of God, which is of great use in Persons of publick employment. Such men are often put to it to make present replies in cases of difficulty and danger. Now to be able upon all such emergencies to make pertinent, safe, honest, and true replies, is a great thing. But besides this useful Gift which God bestows upon some men, he many times comes in on a sudden, and helps men out in difficult and dangerous cases, giving them a *Mouth and Wisdom*, as he promised the Apostles, so guiding their Tongues, and putting such words into their Mouths as the circumstances and exigencies of their present condition requires. This his coming in to your help by guiding your Tongue, you shall often observe if you look up to him, and depend on him: And when you do observe it, be sure that you give him the  
Glory,

Glory, and take not his Praise to your self.

I now go on to *Abraham's* preparing and ordering all things for Sacrificing his Son in the Ninth Verle; *And they came to the place which God had told him of, and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.*

In these words, that which is most considerable, Is *Abraham's* binding his Son. *Isaac*, though he be called a Lad before, as according to the manner of the *H-brew* Tongue young men are called, yet is upon good grounds supposed to have been about Seventeen or Eighteen years old. He must needs have been well grown, strong, and able, that could carry so much Wood as was sufficient for the burning of a dead Body to Ashes. Wherefore his Father being then above an Hundred years old, cannot be thought to have had strength at that age to bind his Son unless he had voluntarily consented thereunto, and freely submitted himself to be bound. It is not to be questioned but that *Abraham* when he came to the place, and had acquainted him with the Command which he had received from God, for offering him as a burnt-offering, did lay before him such reasons and considerations for his submission to the good pleasure of God therein, as gained his free



and chearful consent to undergo what was required concerning him.

See here a rare example of Obedience not only in the Father Sacrificing his Son as a Burnt offering, but also in the Son submitting himself to be Sacrificed. *Isaac's* Obedience, as well as *Abraham's*, was such as can hardly any where else be found, unless in him of whom *Isaac* was a Type, the only begotten Son of God; who for the Salvation of Sinners freely humbled himself, and became Obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. *Isaac's* Obedience may be considered either with relation to God, or his Father; and with respect to the one and the other it was eminent.

1. In relation to God; That a Young Man in the flower of his Age, and in the prime of his strength, should be willing to be deprived of his Life by a violent Death, purely upon account of the Command of God, and in submission to his good pleasure; how great a thing was it! how backward and unwilling are we for the most part to comply with the will of God in any thing that doth but a little cross our carnal desires and corrupt affections! How do we in our Obedience pitch upon what is most easy, and most suitable to our own inclinations, waving and passing by the hardest part of our duty! Lo! here is one that sticks not to submit and yield Obedience  
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even to Death. His own Life is not so dear to him, but that he can be contented to part with it as soon as it appears to him that it is the good pleasure of God that so it should be. The will and command of God carries all before it with him. He hath nothing to say against it, nothing to object why it should not take place, and be immediately submitted to, even in a matter that more nearly touch'd him than any thing in all the world. O when shall it be that our hearts shall be thus subdued to the will of God, and that his Commands shall have that authority, and bear that sway in our Souls!

2. Neither was his Obedience less remarkable in relation to his Father; is it not just matter of admiration that his Father's persuasions and authority should prevail with him to be willing to suffer himself to be Bound in order to his being Sacrificed, and to the end he might thereby quietly offer his throat to be cut, and his heart-blood to be let out by the knife and hand of his Father? How unlike unto *Isaac* are most Children in our days, who are hardly brought to do any thing in compliance with the will of their Parents but what they have a mind to themselves! Yea, let the will and command of God to engage 'em to Obedience be urg'd and pressed upon them never so much, all is one, they will do as they list, let God say what he pleaseth, and let Parents say what

they please to the contrary. And so much may suffice to have been spoken concerning *Isaac's* Submission and Obedience in so difficult a case. But before I go on to what follows, there is one Question that may be moved, unto which I shall speak very briefly. Seeing *Isaac* is supposed to have consented to his being Sacrificed, What necessity was there of his being bound? He being contented and freely willing that his Father should offer him for a Burnt-offering, it may seem to be needless that he should be bound, as Sheep are that they may not struggle and make resistance.

*A.* I Answer, though *Isaac* was contented to be Sacrificed, and freely submitted thereunto, yet there was a double reason for his being bound.

1. Because this was the usual Rite and manner of Burnt-offerings; they were wont to be bound; and therefore *Abraham* being Commanded to offer his Son for a Burnt-offering, in conformity to the usual Rite observed in those Sacrifices, binds him.

2. Though *Isaac* had given his consent to be Sacrificed, and was throughly willing that the Command of God concerning him should be Obeyed, and what he had enjoined be put in execution; yet he did not know but that when he should feel the Knife he might struggle, though against his own will, and by some natural  
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and involuntary motion give some disturbance to his Father, and if not hinder, yet discompose him in the action. For preventing of which inconvenience, the Father binds the Son, and the Son is willing to be bound. Thus we know that they who are willing and very desirous to be Cut for the Stone, or the like, are ordinarily willing to be bound however, for preventing the like inconveniences. *Isaac's* willingness to be bound, to the end he might not by any involuntary motion give disturbance to his Father, as not knowing how far he should be able to command and govern his own Body, may teach us a point of like prudence in what concerns our Souls. You are conscious to your self of your own weakness as to Spiritual things. . Though your purposes be good, and your resolutions against sin are such as seem to be sincere and firm as long as no Temptations come in your way, yet you know not how it might be with you, or what weakness you might discover if you were tried; you know not how you might be over powered with the violence of Temptation, if you should be furiously assaulted by your Spiritual Enemy. Wherefore to prevent what may fall out, be contented to tie up and bind your self beforehand; tie up your self from the use of some part, even of your lawful and harmless liberty, lest going  
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to the utmost line of your liberty, you sometimes leap over, and exceed those bounds which God hath set you. So bind your self with the strictest bonds of stedfast resolutions, and solemn covenants between God and your Soul, as you may not be at liberty to run upon temptations to sin, or to venture to come near those dangerous precipices which threaten your ruin.

And so at length I come to *Abraham's* actual attempting to put the Command of God in execution by Sacrificing his Son in the Tenth Verse; *And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his Son.* Thus we see *Abraham* still goes on with the difficult service imposed on him, and now he is come to the last and highest act of his Obedience; he is just in a readiness to Sacrifice his Son, from which nothing but a countermand from God himself can withhold him. But in the mean time what did *Abraham* think of the Promise of God, *That in Isaac his seed should be called; and that in him, that is, in his Offspring, all the families of the earth should be blessed?* Did he not mind this great Promise? Did it never come into his thoughts all this while? No doubt but that he presently reflected on this Promise as soon as he had received the Command from God for Sacrificing his Son. It could not be, but that the Promise should immediately come  
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to his mind, and all along run in his thoughts from the first to the last. And certainly this was the most difficult circumstance of this his great trial, that God now Commanded him to slay that Son from whom he had Promised the Messiah should descend, *in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed.* This is that which the Apostle takes notice of, and insists on as the hardest knot in the whole business; *Heb. 11. 17, 18. By faith Abraham when he was tried offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises, offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called.* Now how did Abraham relieve and support himself under this his fore trial? How did he keep up his Faith still, now that the ground of it upon the matter was by the Command of God to be taken away? For the promise was to be made good in Isaac's Seed, who was now to be Sacrificed, when as yet he had no Child.

A. I Answer, *Abraham* had two things before his eyes, which he firmly stuck and adher'd to. He had the Promise of God, and the express and peremptory Command of God: He had the Promise of God, That in Isaac all the nations of the earth should be blessed; that Promise he believed should be made good, whatsoever might seem to oppose or contradict the fulfilling of it. And he had the Command of God to Sacrifice that



that very Son in whom the Promise was to be made good. This Command of God must be obeyed. But how these two might consist, and how they might be reconciled to one another; how the Promise should be made good in *Isaac* when he should be sacrificed, that he left to God, and took no further care of it. It was his part to believe the Promise, and to obey the Command; it belonged to God to make good his Promise, which *Abraham* was well assured he would certainly do, though he knew not how. He rested on the Infalible Truth and Almighty Power of God; on these Attributes of God he stays himself, and here he casts Anchor in the dark. Though *Isaac* should be slain, he knew God would not be at a loss for means to make good his Promise. If there were no other way, *he accounted that God was able to raise him even from the dead; as the Apostle adds, Heb. 11. 19.*

Two things we may hence infer,

1. That 'tis of very great concernment to be soundly principled concerning the Nature and Attributes of God: That we get both clear and distinct apprehensions of, and a steady and firm assent unto, what is in Scripture revealed concerning him. This will stand us in great stead in the hour of Temptation; in a dark and gloomy season; in any grievous Trial which God may exercise us with.
2. That

2. That if at any time the Providences or Commands of God seem to cross his Promises, our safest course will be to do as *Abraham* did, to believe his Promises, and obey his Commands, and so doing, to commit our selves and our concernments to him as to a faithful Creator; leaving it to him to find out ways of fulfilling his Word; and assuring our selves, *That heaven and earth shall sooner pass away, than one tittle of what he hath spoken, shall fall to the ground.*

And so much touching *Abraham's* Obedience to the Command of God; which was the second part of this History. Now follows the third part thereof, namely, the Event or Issue of *Abraham's* Trial, in the Eleventh, Twelfth, Thirteenth, and Fourteenth Verses. *And the Angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: And he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his Son. And Abraham called the name of the place Jehovah-jireh; as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall*

*shall be seen.* In which words we have these three things.

1. *Abraham's* discharge from sacrificing his Son, in the Eleventh and Twelfth Verses.

2. The Provision which God made of another Sacrifice to be offered in *Isaac's* room, in the Thirteenth Verse.

3. *Abraham's* thankful Acknowledgment of this signal Providence, in the Fourteenth Verse.

In the first of these, *Abraham's* discharge from sacrificing his Son, we have,

1. The Person by whom he was discharged, An Angel; *The Angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven.*

2. His discharge it self, in those words, *Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him.*

3. The reason why he is discharged; *For now I know that thou fearest me, seeing thou hast not with-held thy son, thine only son from me.*

As to the first particular, the Person by whom he was discharged or taken off from sacrificing his Son, he was an Angel, the Angel of the Lord calling unto him out of Heaven: But not an ordinary Angel, one of the created Angels, but the Angel of the Covenant, the Eternal Son of God, as 'tis thought by many Learned Men, both Ancient and Modern; the same uncreated  
Angel

Angel which often appeared to the Fathers of old; of which Apparitions we often read in the Old Testament, especially in the Books of *Moses*, *Joshua*, and the *Judges*. And though it be true, that in some of those other Apparitions there is clearer evidence to prove that the Angel which appeared was no created Angel, but truly God, yet there wants not something to induce us to believe it here also.

1. I think little question need be made, but that the Angel was one and the same that appeared here the first and second time: For whereas 'tis said, *ver. 11.* That *the Angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven*; 'tis said again, *ver. 15.* That *the Angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time*. Which words seem to imply manifestly, that it was the same Angel, and not another, that now the *second time* called unto him. Wherefore if there be any thing in the Text relating to either of them, that may be a good Argument to induce us to believe that one of them was an uncreated Angel, the Angel of the Covenant; the same Argument will be of equal strength to induce us to believe the same concerning the other, because the Text (as hath been said) gives us ground to apprehend it to have been one and the same Angel that both times called unto *Abraham* out of Heaven.



2. I think it must be granted, that those things which are said of this Angel calling unto *Abraham* out of Heaven the second time, though principally insisted on by some Learned men, cannot be alledg'd as sufficient Proofs to evince that the Angel thus calling to him was an uncreated Angel. For though those words, *By my self have I sworn; for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy Son, thine only son; that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore, and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice:* I say, though those words must necessarily be understood of God, and can be understood of none other but God, there being none other that swears by himself; none other that bleisseth and multiplieth his People; none other that gives them Power over their Enemies; none other that could undertake and promise, That in *Abraham's* seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed; none other, whose Voice *Abraham* obeyed, in addressing himself to offer up his Son; Yet it doth not appear, that the Angel calling to *Abraham* out of Heaven, saith all this, or any part of it, of himself; for the Text runs thus, *And the Angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven,*



*ven, and said, By my self have I sworn, saith the Lord; for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not with-held thy son, thine only son, that in blessing I will bleſs thee, and ſo forth. Wherefore Swearing by himſelf, and all that follows, is referred to the Lord, and cannot fairly be taken otherwiſe; and not to the Angel that called unto Abraham out of Heaven.*

3. But yet however, in what the Angel ſaith calling unto *Abraham* out of Heaven the firſt time, we have that which ſeems to be a ſufficient Argument to prove, that it was not a created Angel, but an uncreated Angel, an Angel that was truly God; for elſe, How could he ſpeak as he doth? *Lay not thine hand upon the lad, ſaith he, neither do thou any thing unto him; for now I know that thou feareſt God, ſeeing thou haſt not with-held thy ſon, thine only ſon from Me. Thou haſt not with-held thine only Son from Me,* ſaith he; which he could not have ſaid if he had been no other than one of the created Angels. 'Tis evident therefore, That he who thus ſpeaks of himſelf, is truly God, the ſame in Nature and Eſſence with God the Father and the Holy Spirit. Neither is this any way repugnant to what the ſame uncreated Angel ſaith afterwards in thoſe words, *By My ſelf have I ſworn, ſaith the Lord.* For the Eternal Son of God, who is himſelf over all, God bleſſed for ever,

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might so speak, either of *Jehovah*, here rendred *the Lord*, personally taken for God the Father, or Essentially for the whole Trinity.

4. If it were needful, and if this were a fit time and place for it, it were easy to prove, That the Angel which frequently appeared to the Patriarchs and others of the Ancient Church, was truly God; and the proof thereof would be at least an Argument strongly probable, that this Angel in the Text, that called unto *Abraham*, must have been the same. But I forbear to pursue this subject any further at present; only let me add, that 'tis not an useless nicety, or fruitless speculation that I have insisted on; he understands it not that judgeth so of it: 'Tis of great concernment that we do not easily part with, and give up those proofs of the Deity of Christ, which these Scriptures afford us, and which the *Socinians*, who deny the Deity of Christ, endeavour to wrest out of our hands. The Deity of Christ is a great fundamental Truth, the whole stress of our Religion, as Christians, rests on it; and all the proof and evidence thereof which the Scripture affords us, is little enough to confirm our Faith concerning this great Truth; so full are we of unbelief as to this important matter, and so apt are we to call it in question. We deceive our selves, and know  
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not our own hearts, if we think we Believe it so firmly and steadily as nothing can shake our Faith.

And so much concerning the Person that discharged *Abraham* from the service in which he was engaged. He was discharged by an Angel, most probably the *Angel of the Covenant*, calling unto him out of Heaven. The Command for Sacrificing his Son he had received immediately from God, and so it was most suitable, and most for *Abraham's* satisfaction, that he should have his discharge immediately from Heaven.

Now follows the discharge it self, *Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him.* *Abraham* was willing to offer up his Son to God for a Burnt-offering; he had prepared and set in order all things for putting the Command of God in execution; and now that he was stretching out his hand to do it, he hath a countermand from God requiring him to forbear.

Whence we may observe, That when we are willing to part with our choicest comforts, and are giving them up to God, he is sometimes pleased to give them back to us again. Those his Providences by which he seems to be about to deprive us of our comforts, are only to try whether we can be contented to part with them upon

his account ; and as soon as our willingness appears, he hath his end, and proceeds no farther.

Wherefore when God at any time, by Sickness, or any other way, puts us in fear that his intentions are to take away those things from us that are dear unto us, the best course that we can take is,

1. To be soundly humbled for our sins, by which we have deserved that our fears should come upon us. And

2. To labour to bring our hearts to a thorough willingness to be at God's disposal, giving up both our selves and ours to him. When once we have brought our hearts to this frame, then are we most likely to obtain of God the continuance of those Mercies to us, which we are willing to part with for his sake. But however, if God should think fit to deprive us of them, our willingness to submit to his good pleasure therein, will stand us in great stead. We shall both part with them more easily, and our hearts will be the more quiet and at rest afterwards. But if a man's heart be so set upon any thing, or so cleave to it, as that he cannot endure to think of parting with it, even when God calls for it, it will be most painful and grievous to him, when it shall be violently rent away from him whether he will or no ; and the loss of it will afterwards affect him with a measure of  
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of smart and heart-piercing Anguish, proportionable to the measure of his unwillingness to leave it. Wherefore a man cannot better provide against whatever God may intend concerning him or his; he cannot better consult his own Peace, Ease, and Quiet, than by endeavouring to get his heart to hang so loose from whatsoever is dearest to him, as to be willing and to be always in a readiness to forgo it, if God see good: For this fits him for entertaining any Providence. If God continue Mercies, he will be thankful; if he take them away, he will be patient, and humbly submissive. He will lay him contentedly at the feet of God, and say, *The Will of the Lord be done; Here I am, deal with me and mine as seemeth good in thine eyes.*

Another thing that we may hence observe, is, That God comes in to succour and relieve his people in the fittest season. Now that *Abraham* was just ready to kill his Son, God steps in, and takes him off. But this Point I shall have an occasion of handling afterwards, and therefore I shall say no more of it at present.

Now if here a Question be moved, How this can stand with the Immutability of God's Will, that first he should command *Abraham* to sacrifice his Son, and then afterwards forbid him to do it?



I answer, That there is nothing in all this, if rightly understood, that doth in the least contradict or infringe the Immutability of the Will of God. For the clearing whereof we must distinguish the Will of God. There is the Will of his Precept or Command, and the Will of his Purpose or Decree. The Will of his Purpose or Decree was, That *Abraham* should not actually kill or sacrifice his Son. That God never intended, purposed, or decreed it, is manifest from the Event: For if God had ever intended or purposed that *Isaac* should be sacrificed, the thing had certainly been done, nothing could have hinder'd it: *For who hath resisted his will?* The Will of God's Precept or Command was, That *Abraham* should sacrifice his Son. By virtue of this Will of God's Precept or Command, it became *Abraham's* Duty to sacrifice his Son, until he was by another Command discharged and taken off from sacrificing him: But it cannot thence be inferred, that God ever intended or purposed he should do it; no, not while that Command stood in force, and was not as yet by a Countermand taken off. For God may and doth command many things, which he doth not will or intend should come to pass. Thus the Will of God's Precept or Command is, That all men should *love him with all their heart, with all their soul, and with all their strength;*  
and

*and that they should love their neighbour as themselves :* And consequently, 'tis the Will of his Precept or Command, That they should constantly and exactly perform all Duties of Love both towards God and towards their Neighbours ; but it was never the Will of his Purpose or Decree, that all men should thus love God and their Neighbour, and perform constantly and exactly all the Duties of Love to the one and to the other ; for if he had decreed it, then it would certainly have been so ; all men would have loved God and their Neighbours perfectly, and they would not have been deficient in any Duty of Love towards God or Man. In a word, If God had decreed to bring to pass whatsoever he commands, or if the Will of God's Decree had been of the same Compass and Extent with the Will of his Command, there had been neither any wicked man, nor any sin in the world.

But you will still object, That it seems therefore, that though the Will of God's Decree be immutable, yet the Will of his Precept or Command is not ; for he commands that which afterwards he forbids. I answer, This must be granted ; 'tis evident here in *Abraham's* Case : And we have another well-known Instance thereof in the Ceremonial Laws, which were given to be in force only for a time, and then to

be abrogated and made void by the coming of Christ ; God never intending those Shadows should any longer continue, than till the Substance was come. Here the Law was altered, and yet no alteration in the Will of God ; I mean, in the Will of his Purpose or Decree ; for he alike decreed both the one and the other ; namely, That those Laws should be binding, and continue in force so long ; and also, That they should be of force no longer, but that the obligation of them should expire and determine with the coming of Christ. And so it was likewise with relation to *Abraham* ; he both decreed that he should be under the obligation of a Command to sacrifice his Son ; and also, that he should by another Command be prohibited and withholden from doing it, when he should be in a readiness to put the first Command in execution. Thus we see the Will of God's Purpose or Decree still remains firm and stable, and still takes effect ; yea, God's taking off the Obligation of his first Command, and commanding the contrary, is so far from prejudicing the Immutability of the Will of God's Decree, that it could not have been immutable, unless there had been both a Command and Countermand concerning the same thing. More plainly, God having decreed that *Abraham* should receive a Command to sacrifice his Son,  
and

and also before it was done, receive another Command not to do it, unless the Will of God's Precept or Command had been thus changed, the Will of his Purpose or Decree could not have been immutable, or at least had not taken effect. Wherefore the change or alteration of the Will of his Command doth not weaken but establish the Immutability of the Will of his Decree. Now if after all that hath been said, any man should not yet be satisfied, but still apprehend there must needs be some change in God, if the Will of his Precepts or Commands may thus be changed; I shall by way of further Explication of what hath been said, desire him to consider,

1. That the Will of God's Precept or Command is not so properly his Will, as that of his Purpose or Decree. For indeed, the Precepts or Commands of God are called his Will, only because they are significations and declarations of what he wills should be our duty, not of what he wills or purposes to effect or bring to pass. His Purposes then, and his Decrees, are most properly his Will.

2. That the Will of God's Precept or Command is an external thing in respect of God; 'tis an external Revelation, Discovery, or Manifestation of our Duty, to us, and of what he requires of us; and therefore, though this Will of his Precept should be  
alter'd

alter'd and chang'd a thousand times, yet it argues not any Change in God. But the Will of his Purpose and Decree is an internal thing in respect of God, and being so, it must needs be immutable, as he himself is.

3. That the Will of God's Precepts or Commands is temporary, hath its beginning in time; for there could be no Command given out, until there was a Creature to be commanded. But the Will of God's Purpose or Decree is eternal; and being eternal, it cannot be really distinguished from God; and being not really distinguished from him, it can no more be subject to any change or alteration than he himself is.

4. That these things being so, we can no more infer the mutability of the Will of God's Decree, or any internal change in him from the change of his Precepts and Commands, than we can from the various Changes and Alterations of any other of his external Providences. We may as well infer a change in God from the various changes that Men and other Creatures undergo in this world, yea, from the interchangeable Vicissitudes of Heat and Cold, Rain and Fair Weather, Day and Night, Winter and Summer, Spring and Autumn, Seed-time and Harvest, as from the Variation of his Precepts and Commands. In short,



short, all these Changes and Alterations, all these Vicissitudes and Variations, are according to, and in pursuance of an Eternal and Immutable Decree of him, *in whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.* Now to add a few words by way of Application of what hath been said, before I go on to what follows.

1. If the Will of God's Precepts be that which concerns us, as laying before us our duty, Let us mind and heed that; let us apply our selves to yield obedience to it; and as for the Will of God's Decree, let us leave that to him, unto whom secret things belong. Let not the black thoughts of any secret Decree of God concerning us, discourage us, or take us off from our duty. Let us be ever found in the ways of obedience to his revealed Will; and so doing, let us rest satisfied, that no secret Decree of his concerning us, shall ever hinder our Salvation. This we know, and are well assured of, that God, *who cannot lye*, hath promised eternal life to all that truly believe and repent; and 'tis utterly impossible that there should be any such secret Decree, as should cross his Promises, and make the fulfilling of them impossible. Let our care be to labour to be qualified as the Promises of God suppose them to be that may hope to be made partakers of what is promised; let us give all diligence to

to get true Faith, and sound Repentance, and Perseverance, and then our Salvation is as sure as the Infallible Truth and Almighty Power of God can make it.

2. The Immutability of God, of which I have been speaking, and of all his Purposes and Decrees, is matter of singular comfort to all such as are in Covenant with God, and know themselves to be so; and that in several cases:

(1.) Under all the various dispensations of God's Providence towards them. God may sometimes cause the Light of his Countenance to shine upon them, and sometimes hide his Face away from them; sometimes he may smile upon them, and sometimes he may frown; sometimes they may enjoy much Spiritual Peace and Comfort, and sometimes they may be full of Trouble and Perplexity of Spirit. And so likewise for outward things, sometimes they may be in a prosperous and flourishing condition, sometimes they may be even overwhelmed with Adversity; sometimes all things may be according to the wishes and desires of their hearts, and sometimes nothing may succeed according to their minds, but God may seem to oppose himself against them, and walk contrary to them in every thing. Now under all these Changes and Varieties of Providence, God is still the same, his Covenant the same, and his Love to his people

people the same ; his Eternal Purposes and Decrees concerning their Salvation are the same. The consideration and sound belief whereof, how great a support and stay it is to the Soul in times of Trial, and in the hour of Temptation, they best know, who are wont to have recourse to it in their various Troubles and Afflictions, and endeavour to improve it. But alas ! Very many that are in Covenant with God, and have an Interest in his special Love and Favour, do not know so much, cannot be satisfied that 'tis so well with them ; or in their sore Trials and Temptations they call all in question, and so are not in a capacity of making any advantage to themselves for their present relief and support, from the consideration of the Unchangeableness of God's Nature, Decrees, Covenant, and Love to his People.

(2.) The consideration of the Immutability of God, and of all his Purposes and Decrees, and consequently of his Covenant with his People, and his Love to them that obey him, is also matter of singular Comfort under the various frames of a man's heart, and the mutability and inconstancy of the course of a man's life. Your heart seldom continues long in any good frame, 'tis subject to many Changes and Alterations. Sometimes it seems to be tolerably quiet and well composed, and  
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sometimes again 'tis out of order, full of hurries and transports, disturbed with unruly and impetuous affections, and under the power of such rebellious distempers as will not be repress'd or kept under. Sometimes it seems to be full of Love, Gentleness, Meekness, Goodness, Patience, and Long-sufferance; and sometimes it seems to be as full of Bitterness, Rage, and Fury, and whatever almost can be named, that ought not to be. So again for your Life and Conversation, how uneven is that also? If you make some attempt at walking with God, and keeping close to him one day, how do you wander, go astray from him, and ramble another day! And as for your Tongue, if you sometimes curb it and keep it under Government, how quickly doth it break loose again, and move as it listeth! Now *the law of kindness* is in your Tongue, and anon the *Adder's Poyson* is under your lips. But yet however, if upon good grounds you know your self to be in Covenant with God, and if you loathe and abhor your self for these woful disorders of your heart and life; if you truly hate them all; if you sincerely and heartily bewail them, renounce and disclaim them, strive and pray against them; it may be matter of support and relief to your troubled Soul, to consider that notwithstanding all the unevenness, variableness, mutability,

bility, and inconstancy of your heart and life, the Eternal Purpose and Decree of God concerning your Salvation is fix'd and stable, firm and immutable ; his Covenant *an everlasting Covenant, ordered and sure ;* his Love stedfast and unchangeable.

(3) The Immutability of God is likewise matter of Comfort and Support, to relieve us and strengthen us against all our fears of whatever future evils may come upon us, we being still supposed to be such as know our selves to be in Covenant with him. We live in perilous times ; what Miseries and Calamities, what fore Trials and Temptations we may encounter with, no man living can foresee. But God's Decrees concerning the Salvation of all that believe and repent, being immutable, his Covenant everlasting, and his Love to his obedient people unchangeable, we are sure that nothing can befall any of them, that shall hinder their Salvation. He who hath ordained them to Eternal Life, will take order and provide, that amid all Changes and Alterations, amid a thousand Vicissitudes of Providence, nothing shall ever fall out to frustrate his Designs, or to defeat and make void the Eternal Counsel of his Will. Though the whole world should be in confusion, and all things should be turned upside down, yet *the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them*



*them that are his*, 2 Tim. 2. 19. He so knows them, as to own them, to take care of them, to protect and defend them, so far as may be for his own Glory, and their good, and especially to secure their Salvation, and bring them safe to Heaven at last, notwithstanding whatever may befall them in their way thither.

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## The Fourth Sermon.

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GEN. XXII. 12.

*For now I know that thou fearest God,  
seeing thou hast not with-held thy son,  
thine only son from me.*

**F**ROM *Abraham's* Discharge from sacrificing his Son, I come now to the Reason thereof; which was the Third Thing to be spoken to. *For now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not with-held thy son, thine only son from me.* That which God aim'd at and intended in commanding *Abraham* to sacrifice his Son, was his Trial. Now that he had been tried, and given good proof of his Faith and Obedience, God takes off *Abraham* from the service in which he had engaged him, and sets *Isaac* at liberty.

Concerning the Sense of those first words, *Now I know that thou fearest God*, I need not here say much. I have shewed before, That God doth not try men, and make experiments upon them, to inform himself of any thing that he was ignorant of before, which were utterly inconsistent

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with

with his Omniscience ; but to discover to themselves and to others what before they did not discern, or were not so well acquainted with. Whence it follows that God cannot be said in a proper sense to have known any thing in or concerning *Abraham*, by means of this Trial, which he did not know before. Wherefore when God saith, *Now I know that thou fearest God*; his meaning is no other than this, Now thou hast discovered or made known that thou fearest God. So then, God here, as often elsewhere in Scripture, condescending to our infirmity, vouchsafeth to speak of himself in such language as we make use of when we speak of one another.

*Now I know that thou fearest God.* The fear of God here, and frequently in other Scriptures, is taken in a very large and comprehensive sense. A man that fears God, in the usual language of the holy Scriptures, is a man that makes Conscience of all his ways ; one that is truly and sincerely religious, and that seriously addicts himself to Piety, carefully avoiding, or endeavouring to avoid every known sin, and to practise every known duty. Such are they of whom the *Psalmist* so often speaks ; as *Psal.* 25. 12. *What man is he that feareth the Lord ? Him shall he teach in the way that he shall chuse.* *Psal.* 34. 7. *The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and del.*

*delivereth them. Psal. 34. 9. O fear the Lord ye his saints; there is no want to them that fear him. And Psal. 112. 1. Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments. And these are they of whom the Prophet Malachi speaks, Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkned and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And again, Unto you that fear my name, shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.* Mal. 3. 16. Mal. 4. 2.

Now whereas the fear of God is thus in Scripture used to signify the whole of true Piety and sincere Godliness, we may thence infer, That the fear of God, the true fear of God, is a great thing, a principal part of true Godliness; so considerable a part thereof, that it gives denomination to the whole, and is put for the whole duty of man. And certainly, this greatly commends the fear of God to us, and should beget in our hearts an high esteem of it, and make us earnestly desire and endeavour to get our hearts thoroughly seasoned with it. O how little have we of this fear of God, for the most part! How little do we stand in awe of him, when we meet with temptations to sin! How do we venture upon those sins which we never durst allow our selves to commit, if the fear of God prevailed in

our hearts! How often doth the *fear of man that shall dye, and of the son of man that shall be made as grass, make us forget the Lord our maker, who hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth!* For attaining a greater measure of this excellent Grace, that hath an universal and powerful influence upon a Christian's whole life, besides earnest and frequent Prayer unto God, that he would be pleased to *put his fear in our hearts*, according to his own Promise, *Jer. 32. 40.* these three things would be singularly Beneficial:

1. That we labour to store our hearts with sound knowledge of God, as to his Nature and Attributes. The Majesty of God is so great and glorious, and his Perfections are so transcendently excellent, that no man can know him in any measure as he is, but he must needs reverence him, and stand in awe of him. 'Tis from mens ignorance of God, that they fear him so little. *As they that know God's name, will put their trust in him, Psal. 9. 10.* so also will they fear him. The knowledge of his Power, Goodness, and Faithfulness, will make them trust in him; and the knowledge of his Greatness and Excellency, his Justice and Holiness, will make them fear him.

2. Frequent thoughts of God, and serious Meditation on his Perfections and Excellencies.



cellencies. If our hearts were exercised with these Meditations but once every day, or as often as our Occasions would permit, we should find by degrees that we should not be so regardless of God as we are; we should not stand so little in awe of him as we do. By our frequent Thoughts of God, and serious Meditation on his Excellencies, new impressions of Fear and Reverence are made upon our hearts; and these impressions being often renewed, the fear of God will become more habitual to us, and rest more constantly upon our hearts.

3. Let us labour to get and keep upon our hearts a lively sense of God's Omnipresence. Really to apprehend, and firmly to believe that God to be ever present with us, who is so transcendently glorious and excellent, would undoubtedly be of as great efficacy for preserving and increasing the fear of God in our hearts, as any thing that can be instanc'd in. But when shall it once be that we shall attain this constant and lively sense of God's Omnipresence? You have, it may be, sometimes lively apprehensions of God's presence; and while you have them, and can retain them, how do they fill your heart with the awe of God! How do they lift you above all carnal fears, and fortify you against Temptations arising from them! If it could be thus with you always, how happy and how strong would

you be ! But O how quickly is this your sense of God's Presence lost ! How quickly is God forgotten, and his fear gone off your heart ! And now every temptation that carnal fear suggests, is too hard for you.

But I return to the Text, *Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.* From which words these Three things may be observed.

1. That we must be willing to part with whatever is dearest to us when God calls for it.

2. That where the true fear of God is, it will make men willing to do it.

3. That a man's obedience to the commands of God, is a good evidence of the fear of God in his heart. Of these in order briefly.

1. We must be willing to part with what is dearest to us when God calls for it. I have spoken somewhat of this before, and therefore shall not here add much to what hath been already said of this subject. That we ought to be willing to part with what is dearest to us when God calls for it, is so clear a truth, and so evident to our reason, as none can gainsay it, although when it comes to the trial, our hearts hang off, and we are not without much difficulty brought

brought over to comply chearfully and readily with the will of God.

For 1. We have received what is dearest to us from God, and he still hath a property in it; 'tis his though he gives us leave to make use of it, and enjoy it for the present. When therefore he takes it from us, he takes but what is his own; and he therein does us no wrong, gives us no just cause of complaining. If we lend any thing to another man, we judge it unreasonable that he should be unwilling to let us have it again when we call for it. The case is the same between God and us; whatever we have is only lent us; What then is more reasonable than that we should be willing to restore it when he that lent it us hath a mind to have it again?

2. Nothing that we have is too good for God. If we really so judge, and be indeed of that mind, Why then should we not be willing that he should take what is dearest to us, if he please? If we can only be willing that he should have such things as we less value, as we have less affection for; this seems to imply that we think our best things too good to be parted with to him.

3. God is the chiefest, the highest Good, and upon that account is to be loved above all other objects whatsoever. Now if we

thus love him, if we have a superlative love for him, a love incomparably exceeding the love we bear to any Creature ; then the love we have for God will so overcome the love we have for what is dearest to us, as that we will not be unwilling to part with it for his sake. If we be not willing to let go our dearest comforts when he will have them from us, 'tis an argument that we love them more than God.

4. We being Creatures, our wills ought to be in subjection to the will of God ; which they cannot be unless we are willing that should be which he will have done. If it be his will to deprive us of what is dearest to us, and we be not willing it should so be, How are our wills subject to his will ? Where is our subjection, if our wills be contrary to his will ? Now to apply this briefly ;

1. This lets us see what cause we have to be humbled in respect of the reluctancy and unwillingness that we find in our selves to submit to the will of God when he toucheth us in what is dear to us, and, as it were, threatens to take those things from us which our hearts are set upon. He knows little of himself that hath not observed this inordinate affection of his Soul to something or other. And he that doth observe it, must needs acknowledge it a very great and shameful disorder of the Soul

Soul, thus to oppose it self against God, and to prefer its own will before his.

2. Labour to get this distemper removed; be not at rest till you can say, There is nothing in the world so dear to you, but you could be willing to part with it if God should call for it. What is that thing which is most dear to you? What is it that your heart cleaves unto above all other things? Often put the question to your Soul, Could I part with that thing if God should see good to take it from me? Could I willingly and chearfully give it up to him? O never think your heart to be in a right frame till you can do it! as long as your heart gives back and recoils, as long as you cannot endure to think of parting with such or such a thing that is dear to you, there is nothing surer then that there is some excess and sinful inordinacy of your affections to that thing.

Now to bring your heart to this frame, to make you willing to part with what is dearest to you, when God calls for it, besides the considerations before-mentioned, consider,

1. That the dearer any thing is to you, the greater proof you give of your humble submission to the will of God, and of your love to him in being willing to part with it when he calls for it. To be willing to part with such things as you do not  
much



much value or care for, this is no great argument, either of your submission to the will of God, or of your love to him. But willingly and chearfully to give up to him what you most value and esteem, what of all earthly things lies nearest your heart, and hath the greatest interest in your affections: this is that which gives God occasion of saying concerning you, Now I know that thy will is thoroughly subdued to my will, and that thou truly lovest me, seeing thou hast not withheld thy dearest comforts from me, seeing thou hast not been unwilling to let them go upon mine account.

2. The dearer any thing is unto us, the more acceptable to God is our willingness to part with it when he calls for it. This was that which made *Abraham's* willingness to Sacrifice his Son so highly acceptable to God, that it was his only Son *Isaac* whom he loved. Can you also give up your *Isaac* whom you love; your dearest Relation to God, seeing 'tis God's pleasure to call for it? Know that God takes it well at your hands, and the more difficult it hath been to bring your heart to it, the more pleasing it is unto him, that against so much reluctancy and opposition from flesh and blood, you have done it at last.

3. When God finds us willing, in compliance with his will, to part with what is dearest

dearest to us, he usually makes us amends afterwards some other way. To be sure we are never losers in the end by our willingness to part with any thing upon his account, and because it was his good pleasure that it should so be.

And so I come to the second Observation, That the fear of God will make a man willing to part with what is dearest to him when God calls for it. It was the fear of God in *Abraham's* heart that made him willing to do it; and the same fear of God will make you willing to give up to him what is dearest to you when he shall require it. The reason is, because the true fear of God, as hath been said before, comprehends the whole of sincere Piety and true Religion; and whosoever is sincerely Pious and truly Religious, loves God above any earthly thing, humbly submits to him in all things, and prefers his will before his own. But this Observation being of near affinity with the former, I shall not any further insist on it.

The Third Observation was, That a man's obedience to the commands of God, is a good evidence of the fear of God in his heart. God had commanded *Abraham* to Sacrifice his Son; *Abraham* readily addresseth himself to yield obedience to the command; and thereupon God saith, *Now I know that thou fearest God.* But then especially

cially is your obedience a sound evidence of the fear of God in your heart, when the most difficult commands of God, and such as require the greatest self-denial, are readily complied with and obeyed. So it was with *Abraham*; the command of God was most difficult, and yet he was as ready to obey, as if it had been some very easy and ordinary thing that was required of him. There is a double use that may be made of this Point.

1. It discovers the unsoundness of the estate of many that make a Profession of Religion: They would be taken for such as truly fear God, and they would think themselves greatly injured if any man should think otherwise of them. But if the truth of the fear of God in their hearts be to be evidenced and demonstrated by their Obedience, it will appear upon enquiry made, that there is very little of that fear of God in them which they pretend unto, and make account they are endued with. Such are all those who yield not universal obedience to the commandments of God. More particularly.

1. Such as seem to make much conscience of the Duties of the first Table, but make little or no conscience of Duties of the second Table: Such as under a profession of Piety towards God, deal Unjustly and Uncharitably with men.

2. Such

2. Such as make choice of some more easy Duties to exercise themselves in them, but wave and lay aside the more difficult parts of their Duty. These mens partial dealing with God in their obedience, shews that the true fear of God is not in them; for that would dispose and incline their hearts to universal obedience; the allowance of your self in any one sin makes you guilty of the breach of the whole Law. James 2.  
10.

And then judge you, how that can consist with any true fear of God in your heart. 'Tis a most dangerous thing to be possessed with an opinion that you are one that truly fears God, when there is no such matter. If you should die under this mistake, you would everlastingly perish; wherefore be persuaded to take some pains with your self, that you may be able upon good grounds to judge your self to be one that truly fears God. To this end, be sure that you make Conscience of practising every known duty, and of avoiding every known sin; search into your self, and impartially examine your self in order to your discovery of any duty that you neglect, or any sin that you allow your self in; and having found wherein you come short of universal obedience, never rest satisfied until you can truly and sincerely affirm, That you know no duty, but you truly and heartily endeavour to practise it; no sin, but you unfeignedly

unfeignedly desire and endeavour to avoid it. When thus 'tis with you, then may you warrantably conclude, that you are one that truly fears God, and not till then. And so much concerning that first Use.

2. If our Obedience to the Commands of God be a good evidence of the fear of God in our hearts, this truth may be of good use for the satisfaction and quieting of some who question whether they be such as truly fear God, or whether there be any true fear of God in their hearts. The ground or reason of their questioning it, is, because they do not find their hearts affected with such an holy Awe and Reverence of God, as is any way suitable and answerable to his Majesty and Greatness; they do not so Tremble at his Threatnings and Judgments as they desire to do; they feel not upon their Spirits that Awe of his Presence when they come before him, which they have of the presence of a mortal man, *whose breath is in his nostrils*, if he be much above them. Now though these things argue a great defect of the fear of God in your heart; as to the degree and measure of it, yet are they no sufficient arguments to prove that you are utterly void of all true fear of God, provided that you are humbled for your defects, and heartily bewail them; and provided that you are troubled that there is no greater  
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Awe and Reverence of God upon your heart, and labour after it. But are you one that is careful to yield obedience to all God's Commandments, and to walk conformably to his revealed Will in all things? Are you one that dare not allow your self in the neglect of any known duty, or in the practice of any known sin? Are you one that constantly desire and endeavour to have respect unto all God's Commandments, making Conscience of the hardest part of your duty as well as of that which is easier? Then have you no reason to question the truth of the fear of God in your heart, notwithstanding whatever wants and defects of his fear you may be sensible of. This is a certain rule, a rule that cannot fail you, He that yields God Obedience in all things, is one that truly fears him; and he that doth not thus obey him, hath not that fear of God in his heart, by which the Scriptures frequently describe a Godly Man.

But now what may we think of them who give themselves up to the practice of all manner of sin with greediness? Who mind and study nothing more than to *make provision for the flesh*, that they may *fulfill the lusts thereof*? The lewd and vicious conversation of these Persons tells all the world that they are such as fear not God. *The* Psal. 36.1.  
*transgression of the wicked saith within my heart,*

heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes. His meaning is, that the wickedness of their lives is a convincing argument, a plain demonstration to him, that they are utterly void of the true fear of God. These profligate and ungodly Persons are so far from having their hearts affected with the true fear of God, I mean, with that gracious and filial fear which I have been speaking of, that by their vicious courses they bid defiance against God, and openly proclaim that they care not for him, neither will they be in subjection to him. These in effect say, with those Enemies of Christ and his Government, *Psal. 2. 3. Let us break his bonds asunder, and cast away his cords from us.* Do these men consider how fearful their condition is? Do they think that 'tis safe to contend with God, and to enter into the lists with the Almighty? O take heed of being so desperately bold and hardy, as thus to *run upon the thick bosses of his buckler!* Wo to him that strives with his maker; let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth, *Isa. 45. 9.*

So I have done with *Abraham's* discharge from the service in which he was engaged. I now go on to the next thing, namely, the Provision which God made of another Sacrifice to be offered instead of *Isaac*, in the thirteenth verse, *And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught*

*taught in a thicket by his horns ; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering in the stead of his son.* Whence this Ram came, the Scripture not informing us, it is both needless to enquire, and impossible to satisfy our selves about it. 'Tis sufficient that we are informed, That a Ram there was in a readiness, and that also secured for *Abraham's* use, so caught by the Horns in a Thicket, as it could not get away from him. This Ram *Abraham* casting his eyes on, took it, and offered it instead of his Son.

But you will say, How could he take it, and make that use of it lawfully ? Might he not justly have made scruple of doing it, seeing he knew not whence it was, nor how it came thither ? Might it not have stray'd from some man's Flock, not far from that place, unto whom it belonged ? How then could *Abraham* satisfy himself to lay hold of, and kill the Ram, which perhaps appertained to somebody that could own it ; and which was none of his, whoever were the Owner of it ?

I answer, That God, no doubt, who provided it for him, and, as it were, brought it to his hand, did also satisfy him, that it was his pleasure that he should make use of it. God hath a right to dispose of all the Creatures, as he sees good ; *his are the cattel on a thousand hills,* as he himself

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speaks,

speaks, *Psal.* 50. 10. Wherefore to whomsoever that Ram belonged, God might take it from him, and give it to *Abraham*, to be offered up in the room of his Son. So then, *Abraham* having God's allowance and warrant for what he did, might as well make use of the Ram for a Sacrifice, as he might make use of the Wood that he brought along with him, or of any thing else that he was possessed of. We read in *1 Kings* 17. 6. That *the ravens brought the Prophet Elijah bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening.* These Ravens took this Bread and Flesh from somebody that owned it; but however, the Prophet makes no scruple of eating it, because God had commanded the Ravens to bring it him, *v.* 4. And therefore to whomsoever it appertained before, it was now *Elijah's*, God having transferred the Property of it, and bestowed it upon the Prophet. The case of *Abraham* was much the same. Whosoever owned the Ram before, it was now *Abraham's*; God's allowance of him to take it, and make use of it, made it his.

But you will further say, How did *Abraham* know so much? Did he collect and infer that God intended he should make use of it, because it was there at hand caught in the Thicket, and because it was presently in his eye, and presented to his view as  
soon



soon as he had been discharged from sacrificing his Son?

I answer; Though there was much of Providence in these Circumstances, yet all this had not been enough to satisfy *Abraham* that he might lawfully make use of it, unless God had further manifested his pleasure concerning it. Wherefore we need not question, but that besides these Providences he had his allowance and warrant immediately from God, from whose instinct and motion it was, that he now without any scruple took the Ram and sacrificed it.

Now whereas God had thus provided this Ram to be in a readiness to be offered up instead of *Isaac*, when *Abraham* thought not of it, we may observe, That God takes care of us, and makes provision beforehand of what he foresees we shall stand in need of, even when we think not of it, nor in the least concern our selves about it. Alas! our forecast signifies very little. If God should take no more care of us than we are able to take of our selves, it would be ill with us. We are ignorant of our own concernments; we are not sensible of many of our present dangers and wants, much less can we foresee what may come upon us hereafter, or what we shall stand in need of; and much less again were we able to make those provisions that are necessary, if we were perfectly acquainted both with



whatever concerns us at present, and with whatever will concern us hereafter. But unto God are all things known, both past, present, and future; they are all *naked and open in his sight*; and accordingly he makes provision long before, of whatsoever he foresees will be needful for our Preservation. Safety, Help, Succour, or Relief in any kind. O how happy are we in having such a Friend to take care of us, to provide for us, to shelter us in every storm, to supply us with what our exigences call for in every time of need, to be a sure refuge, and an house of defence, an hiding place, and little sanctuary to us, whatever Calamities may be coming upon us! If we belong to him, with what holy confidence and security may we commit our selves to his care and protection! With what quietness and serenity of spirit may we cast our selves upon his Providence!

Again; though God had provided a Sacrifice to be offered up instead of *Isaac*, and though it were near at hand, just behind *Abraham's* back, yet he saw it not till the very time when he was to make use of it: *Then he lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns.*

Whence we may further observe, That though the provisions that God hath made for us, and the means of our succours and relief

relief be at hand, yet it sometimes seems good unto God to conceal them, and hide them away from us for some time. God oft-times deals with us as he did with *Hagar*, *Gen. 21*. Great was her distress when she and her Child were in danger of perishing with thirst. When her Bottle of Water was spent, and she knew not, being in a dry Wilderness, whence to supply her self with any more, she cast her Child under one of the shrubs; *and she went, and sate here down over-against him a good way off; for she said, Let me not see the death of the child; and she lift up her voice, and wept, ver. 15, 16*. But, poor disconsolate Woman, her relief was nearer at hand than she was aware of; *God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water, and she went and filled her bottle with water, and gave the lad drink, ver. 19*. 'Tis many times our case; our succours are not far off, but God must open our eyes before we can see them. Now God's designs and ends in this Dispensation are divers; he hides the means of our relief from us,

1. That he may in the mean time humble us more thoroughly and effectually for our sins.

2. That he may quicken us and stir us up to Prayer, and make us more earnest and importunate therein.

3. That he may exercise our Faith and Dependance on him, while he thus keeps us in the dark.

4. That he may hereby commend his Mercies to us in the end, make them more acceptable to us, and us more truly thankful for them.

Well then, to apply this in a word; Is this your condition? Are you in the dark, and at a great loss as to your own Personal Concernments, or as to the Affairs of the Church? Are Clouds and thick Darknes round about you? Is the present face of things at any time so black and dismal, as you know not what to make of it? Are your present Dangers or Distresses such at any time, as you see not whence you may expect relief? This is very sad indeed; but yet however, be not discouraged, God is not at a loss, though you are. The means of your own and the Church's relief may be near at hand, though you see it not. Hope in him, and wait on him quietly and patiently, whose Wisdom, and Power, and Goodness are infinite, and who takes delight to prevent his People with his Loving-kindness, and to do for them exceeding abundantly, above any thing that they are able to ask or think.

Thus having spoken of the provision which God made of another Sacrifice to be offered up instead of *Isaac*;

I come

I come to *Abraham's* Thankful Acknowledgment of this signal Providence, in the 14th. verse. *And Abraham called the name of the place Jehovah-jireh ; as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.* Calling the name of the place, *Jehovah-jireh*, that is, *The Lord will provide*, he therein alluded to the Answer which he had given his Son. *Behold, the fire and the wood, said Isaac, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering ?* *Abraham replied, Jehovah-jireh, The Lord will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering.* *Abraham* when he returned that Answer to his Son's Question, little thought of such a provision as God afterwards made ; he had then no apprehensions of any other Burnt-offering than that of *Isaac*. But God so guided his tongue, as that he gave such an answer as where-with the Event should exactly accord and correspond, though in another way than *Abraham* intended. In the words we have two things ;

1. *Abraham's* imposing a new Name upon the place where God so remarkably appeared in providing another Burnt-offering instead of *Isaac* ; *Abraham called the name of the place Jehovah-jireh.*

2. The Proverbial Speech that was thereupon taken up, and long continued in the mouths of men ; *As it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.*

Each of these will afford us an Observation. I begin with the former, *Abraham's* imposing a new Name upon the place, *he called the name of the place Jehovah-jireh*. The word *Raah* properly signifies to See, but here it signifies to Provide; as with the Latins *Videre* is sometimes taken for *Providere*. Now *Abraham* gave the place this Name, that he might thereby preserve and continue, transmit to Posterity, and perpetuate the memory of the signal Provision which God had made for him. Whence we may observe.

That the memory of God's Mercies, especially of extraordinary and signal Mercies, ought to be carefully preserved by us. This Observation I shall first confirm, then give the reasons of it, and lastly apply it.

For the first of these, That 'tis our duty to preserve the memory of God's Mercies, especially of extraordinary and signal Mercies, may appear from what God himself hath done concerning this matter, and from what his People have done.

1. As for God, he hath strictly enjoined the preserving the memory of his Mercies, he hath instituted Monuments, Rites, and yearly Festivals, for preserving the memory of them; and he hath commanded that Children and Posterity should be acquainted with what he had done for their Ancestors.

When



When God had brought the *Israelites* to the borders of the Land of *Canaan*, having in their deliverance out of *Egypt*, and all along afterwards in their march through the Wilderness given them many notable demonstrations of his Power, Mercy, and Truth; he lets them know that he would have none of those things lost, all those remarkable Providences must be carefully preserved; *Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness*, saith he to them, *Deut. 8. 2.* All the way, that is, all God's dealing with them, and his whole conduct of them, all the great things which he did for them, all the provisions which he made for them in all their straits throughout all their Journeyings from *Egypt* to the Land of *Canaan*. And as he enjoined the remembrance of his Works, so he took order for bringing them to their minds. To instance again in the same Deliverance of his People out of *Egypt*; how many ways did he take, order, and provide, that what he had therein done for them might never be forgotten! To this end it was that the beginning of their year was changed, *The Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, saying, this month, (that is, the Month Abib) shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you, Exod. 12. 1, 2.* For whereas before, their year began

began with the Month *Ethan*, which agreed with our *September*; now in remembrance of this miraculous deliverance they were appointed to begin it with the Month *Abib* (which usually answered to some part of our *March* and *April*) because in this Month they came out of *Egypt*, as appears *Chap. 13. 4.* Again, in remembrance of the same Deliverance, and of his sparing the First-born of the *Israelites* when he slew the First-born of the *Egyptians*, God was pleased to Institute the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, as we may read at large, *Exod. 12.* where we may observe how much God urgeth the perpetual remembrance of those Mercies, and makes the great intention of these Institutions to have been the preservation of the memory of them. So having given charge for the observation of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and set down all the particular circumstances thereof, he concludes, *v. 17.* *Ye shall observe the feast of unleavened bread, for in this self-same day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt; therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations, by an ordinance for ever.* And speaking of the time in which the Passover was to be Eaten, he saith, *It is a night much to be observed unto the Lord for bringing them out of the land of Egypt; this is that night of the Lord to be observed of all*  
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*the children of Israel in their generations,*  
v. 42. And lest these Ceremonies only  
should in after-times be observed, but the  
intendment and meaning of them be for-  
gotten; for preventing hereof, God gives  
an expresse charge that their Children  
should be instructed concerning the mean-  
ing of these Ordinances; *It shall come to*  
*pass, that when your children shall say unto*  
*you, What mean you by this service? that ye*  
*shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's pass-*  
*over, who passed over the houses of the chil-*  
*dren of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the*  
*Egyptians, and delivered our houses,* v. 26, 27.  
Furthermore, as if all this were not suffici-  
ent to secure the preservation of the me-  
mory of these Mercies, God was also  
pleased to enjoin all the First-born of the  
Israelites, to be, as it were, set apart for  
himself; *The Lord spake unto Moses, saying,*  
*Sanctify unto me all the first-born, whatsoever*  
*openeth the womb among the children of Israel,*  
*both of man and of beast, it is mine,* Exod.  
13. 1, 2. And the intention of God also in  
this Institution, is afterwards explained,  
and order taken that Posterity might un-  
derstand it; *It shall be that when thy son*  
*shall ask thee in time to come, saying, What is*  
*this? thou shalt say unto him, By strength of*  
*hand the Lord brought us out from Egypt,*  
*from the house of bondage; and it came to*  
*pass when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that*  
the

*the Lord slew all the first-born of the land of Egypt; therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all that openeth the womb; but all the first-born of my children I redeem. And It shall be for a token upon thine hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes; for by strength of hand the Lord brought us forth out of the Land of Egypt, v. 14, 15, 16.* As for those last words, *It shall be for a token upon thine hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes*; the meaning of them is, That the forementioned Institutions and Ceremonies were appointed to mind them and their Posterity of what God had done for them; as if you should tie a string about your finger, or have a Jewel or some such thing on your forehead to hang down between your eyes, to put you in mind of somewhat which you would not forget.

So afterward, when by the conduct of *Joshua*, God led his People into the promised Land, miraculously dividing the waters of the River *Jordan* to make a way for their Passage, he commanded a Monument of that great work to be erected to inform Posterity thereof; Twelve Men taken out of the People, out of every Tribe a Man, must take up Twelve Stones out of the midst of *Jordan*, out of the place where the Priests feet stood firm; and these Stones they must carry over with them, and leave them in the place where they should lodge  
that

that night ; that they might be a sign unto their children in time to come (as Joshua tells them) that the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, when it passed over ; and that those stones might be a memorial to the children of Israel for ever, Josh. 4. 2, 3, 6, 7. A Memorial, what's that but a Sign or Monument to help to preserve the memory of that great work ? To the like end was the Feast of Tabernacles Instituted. When God led the Children of Israel Forty years through the Wilderness, they had no Houses nor fixed Habitations, but Booths or Tabernacles, and moveable Tents, in which, however, they were safe and secure from danger, through God's Protection. Now that after they should come into the Land of Canaan, and be there settled, God's gracious Providence over them in the Wilderness might not be forgotten, God Instituted this Feast of Tabernacles to be observed yearly, in which for seven days together they were to go out of their Houses and make their abode in Booths ; *Ye shall dwell in booths seven days, that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt*, saith the Lord, Levit. 23. 42, 43. that thus all succeeding Generations might come to understand what God had done for their Ancestors. And thus we have seen what Injunctions



junctions God hath laid upon his People, what means he hath used, and what provision he hath made, that his Mercies, and the great works of his gracious Providence, might not be forgotten.

2. We shall also find that his People have been very careful this way. Their constant practice in setting up Monuments of God's Mercies, is apparent in the History of the Patriarchs, and other Holy Men in the Old Testament. One notable instance thereof, is this of *Abraham's* calling the place, *Jehovah-jireh*, where God had so graciously provided another Sacrifice to be offered up instead of *Isaac*. So when after several contentions and strivings between the Herdsmen of *Gerar* and the Herdsmen of *Isaac*, God had at length been pleased so to put an end to those quarrels, as *Isaac's* Herdsmen had no more disturbance from them; in memory of this Mercy, *Isaac* called the Name of a Well which he had then digged, *Rehoboth*, that is, *breadth or room, for*, said he, *Now the Lord hath made room for us, and we shall dwell in the Land*, Gen. 26. 22.

When *Jacob* had been wrestling with God, who appeared to him in the shape of a Man, and had by his earnest Prayers so prevailed with him, as that he was sent away with a new Name, or a Title of Honour, *Thy name*, said God to him, *shall be*

*no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince thou hast had power with God and with men, and hast prevailed; Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, that is, the face of God; for I have seen God face to face, said he, and my life is preserved, Gen. 32. 30.*

If God be graciously pleased to give Israel a notable Victory over *Amalek*, *Moses* takes order that God may have the Glory of this Victory, and that the memory of it may not be buried; he builds an Altar, and calls the Name of it *Jehovah-Nissi*, that is, *the Lord is my banner*; as if he had said, The Lord is our Captain-General, under his Ensign and Conduct we prevail, *he it is that treadeth down our enemies under our feet, Exod. 17. 15.*

If God in Answer to the Prayers of *Samuel*, be pleased to give a great Discomfiture to the Enemies of his People, *Samuel* will set up a Stone in memory thereof, and he will call it *Ebenezer*, that is, *the stone of help*; for hitherto, saith he, *bath the Lord helped us, 1 Sam. 7. 12.*

If *Jehoshaphat* by Fasting and Humiliation obtain a glorious Victory over his Enemies of several Nations that had Combined against him, the Valley where they assembled to bless God for this Mercy, shall be for ever after called *the valley of Berachah*, that is, *the valley of blessing*; that Name of the place shall make that Victory, and  
God's

God's Mercy therein, famous to all Generations, 2 *Chron.* 20. 26. If God be pleased to comfort and encourage *Jacob* by a gracious manifestation of himself to him in a Dream, assuring him of his Presence and Protection in all places whither he should go, now that he was flying from the wrath of his Brother *Esau*, and to continue for many years in the condition of a man banished from his Father's house, and from all his dearest Relations; he will take the Stone that had been his Pillow that night, and set it up for a Pillar to be a lasting Monument of that Mercy, and he will call the name of the place *Bethel*, that is, *the House of God*, in which God had so graciously appeared to him in his distress, *Gen.* 28. 18, 19. Again; if in his Old Age he be to undertake a long, tedious, and hazardous Journey into *Egypt*, together with all his Family, and God be graciously pleased upon his entrance on that Journey to send his Angels to meet him, thereby giving him to understand, that having those glorious Spirits for his Guard in the way, he should not need to fear; *Jacob* will also in memory of that Mercy, and for transmitting it to Posterity, call the name of the place *Mahanaim*, that is, *the Host of God*, *Gen.* 32. 2. And hereunto agrees the practice of the People of God in former times, calling their Children by such names as might remember

member them of God's Mercies, and bring them to their minds as often as those names were mentioned in their Families. This usage is as old as *Adam* himself, who when God had given him another Son after that *Cain* had murdered *Abel*, called his name *Seth*; which name is derived from a word that signifies to *set*, or *appoint*; For God, said he, *hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew*, Gen. 4. 25. Thus the Patriarchs frequently called their Children by such names as in their significations pointed at some special Providence of God. And this practice took place also in after-times. Thus *Joseph*, when after his many troubles and afflictions he had been advanced and honourably married in *Egypt*, called the name of his first-born *Manasseh*, from a word that signifies to *forget*; For, said he, *God hath made me to forget all my toil, and all my father's house*. And he called the name of the second *Ephraim*, from a word that signifies to *increase*, or to *be fruitful*; For, said he, *God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction*, Gen. 41. 51, 52. And thus *Hannah*, when she had by Prayer obtained a Child of the Lord, called his name *Samuel*, which signifies, *the Lord hath heard*, or *answered*; Because, said she, *I have asked him of the Lord*, 1 Sam. 1. 20.

Besides all that hath been hitherto said, the care of God's people to preserve and keep alive the memory of special Mercies, appears by those many Songs of Praise and Thanksgiving, penned upon occasions of extraordinary Mercies, and delivered down to Posterity. Such was that Song of the *Israelites*, after that God had brought them out of *Egypt* by a strong Hand, and stretched-out Arm, and safely led them through the Red Sea, in which the *Egyptians* pursuing them, were drowned, *Exod.* 15. Such was the Song of *Deborah* and *Barak*, after the signal Victory which God had given them over the Host of *Jabin* and *Sisera*, *Judg.* 5.

Such was the Song of *Hannah* after that she had by Prayer obtained a Son, *1 Sam.* 2.

And many such solemn Forms of Praise, and Songs of Thanksgiving, penned upon special occasions, hath *David* left upon record in the Book of *Psalms*, to preserve the Memory of Mercies received, and to make the Church in future Ages acquainted with what God had done for him; among which there are two most remarkable; the one is, *Psalms* 18. the title whereof is this, *A Psalm of David the servant of the Lord; who spake unto the Lord the words of this song, in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul.* The other is, *Psalms* 136. which



which contains a Commemoration of the many great Works which God in former times had wrought for his Church, and the signal Deliverances that he had vouchsafed his people; in which *Psalm* those notable expressions of his Thankfulness, *For his mercy endureth for ever*, are twenty six times repeated.

*Lastly*, To the end that signal Mercies might never be forgotten, and the memory of them never dye; to the end that they might not depart out of the mouths of those on whom they were conferred, nor out of the mouths of their seed, nor out of the mouths of their seed's seed, from thenceforth and for ever, days have been set apart for the thankful Commemoration of them, to be solemnly observed by Posterity in all succeeding Ages and Generations. Instances hereof are, the Feast of *Purim*, in memory of the deliverance of the Church of God from that destruction which *Haman's* wicked Plot, if it had taken effect, had brought upon it, *Esth.* 9. 20, 21, 22, 23. And the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple, mentioned *Joh.* 10. 22. which was instituted in memory of the Restoration of the Publick Worship of God, after that *Antiochus Epiphanes* had polluted the Temple, and caused the Worship of God to cease there. Thus we have also seen how solicitously careful the Peo-

ple of God have been to preserve the memory of God's great Works, and special Mercies. Neither were they so careful without cause; it did very much concern them, and doth no less concern us so to be, as well in regard of our extreme proneness to forget the Mercies of God, as in regard of the danger and evil consequents thereof: Which brings me to the reasons of the Observation, the second thing to be spoken of.

1. We are very prone to forget what God hath done for us. *David* was sensible of his infirmity this way, and therefore he called upon himself, *Psal. 103. 2. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.* How many remarkable Passages of God's Providence have we met with in the course of our Lives, which are now gone from us, and utterly lost! Yea, the greatest works of God are soon out of mind, unless great care be taken to remember them. The glorious and miraculous Works of God for *Israel* were such, as a man would think it impossible that they should ever be forgotten. And yet the *Psalmist* saith of that people, *That they forgot his works, and the wonders that he had shewed them, Psalm 78. 11. They soon forgot his works, Psalm 106. 13.* If they had any thoughts of them sometimes, yet they had not so frequent, lively, and effectual a remembrance of them as was requisite. 'Tis our case; we see, perhaps,

haps much of God in his works of Mercy at first, and a great sense we seem to have of them while it lasts ; but it lasts not long. After a while, though we sometimes call them to mind in a manner, yet 'tis as if we did not. We see very little of God in them ; and the sense we at first had of them is as good as lost.

2. The danger and evil consequents of our forgetting the Mercies of God, are another reason why God's people have been, and we also should be careful to remember them.

(1.) We hereby incur God's displeasure, who cannot take it well at our hands that we should be forgetful of those his gracious Providences which he hath so many ways engaged us to remember. The least that can be done by a person of any ingenuity and gratitude, is to remember kindnesses. He that goes not thus far, is deservedly reputed a most unworthy and disingenuous person. We our selves take it very ill at the hands of Children or others whom we have obliged, and for whom we have done much, if they seem to be mindless and regardless of what hath been done for them. How much more then may God, who is infinitely above us, and hath done a thousand times more for us !

(2.) By our forgetfulness of what God hath done for us, he loseth much of the

Honour, and we much of the Benefit thereof. When things are forgotten, 'tis almost all one as if they had never been. We can no more give God the glory of them, or improvethem for our good, than as if such favours had never been vouchsafed us.

(3.) By our forgetfulness of Mercies we provoke God to withdraw his hand, and to refuse to appear and work for us any more. How can we expect he should, if his Mercies be buried in oblivion, and if we do not think it worth the while to charge our memories with them? And so from the reasons of the Observation, I come to the Application thereof.

*Use 1.* If we be obliged upon so many accounts to preserve the memory of God's Mercies, especially of extraordinary and signal Mercies, then have we all great cause to be humbled for our neglect this way.

For 1. We are so far from using our best endeavours to keep in mind the Mercies of God, and to have them in remembrance, that we scarce take any notice of many of God's Mercies; many considerable Mercies we overlook and pass by, and this either because they are common Mercies, and such as many others partake of, together with our selves; or because they are of a spiritual nature, and so we being carnal have no esteem for them, set no price on them;

or

or because they are perhaps such Mercies as tend to the curbing and the restraining of our corrupt nature, and the giving check to our vicious inclinations.

As for the first of these, Though Mercies be very great and considerable, yet because they are such as are common to us with many others, we overlook them and pass them by. Such Mercies are the integrity of our Bodies, the soundness of our Limbs, the use of our Senses, especially our Eye-sight and Hearing, the use of our Speech, the undisturbed exercise of our Reason and Understanding: These Mercies, how great, how unvaluable are they! and yet they being common, and such as most men enjoy together with our selves, how little do we mind or regard them! So likewise Publick Peace, Liberty, and Safety, the quiet Possession and Enjoyment of what we have; our freedom and exemption from all the Miseries and Calamities of War, which our Neighbours abroad have long groaned under; our Bodily Health and Strength, Vigour and Activity; our ease and exemption from Pain; our having been free from those languishing Infirmities, and intolerable Tortures which some others have laboured under; these great Mercies also, because common to many others who have the enjoyment of them as well as our selves, how easily do we overlook and dis-



regard! So hard a matter is it to see and value Meries, even great Mercies, when we have the constant enjoyment of them in common with many others.

Secondly, Other Mercies we overlook and pass by, because they are of a spiritual nature, for which, we being carnal, have no esteem. The Light of the Gospel, the liberty of waiting upon God in the Assemblies of his People, the Means of Grace, and Opportunities of acquainting our selves with the things that belong to our Peace; the many gracious Calls and Invitations to Faith and Repentance, which God vouchsafeth us; the Long-sufferance and Patience of God still waiting to be gracious, often renewing and repeating the Tenders of Mercy, after that they have been so often slighted and rejected: These are great Mercies, Mercies that cannot be sufficiently valued or esteemed; and yet how many are there that make no reckoning of them, have no more esteem for them, than as if they were not to be at all ranked among their Mercies! Add hereunto those Spiritual Mercies which tend to the curbing and restraining of our corrupt nature, and the giving check to our vicious Inclinations; To be under the restraints of Government; to be abridged of sinful liberty; to live under the inspection of those who will not give the reins to their corrupt affections, and

and sensual appetites ; to live in those Families where they must conform to the good Orders of the Family, and may not take leave to do as they list : These are great Mercies, if rightly understood ; but how few are there who so account them ? So, to be reprov'd for sin is a Mercy ; but how few so think of it ? How many are most impatient of any thing that shall but look that way ? So for those Chastisements and Corrections which God lays upon us for our sins, these also are great Mercies, because intended for our greatest good ; but yet there are but few who reckon them among their Mercies, and as such take special notice of them to remember them, and to be thankful for them. 'Tis certainly a great Mercy that God withstands men, and stops them in their course of sin ; that he opposeth them, and *hedgeth up their way with thorns, that they may not find their paths.* He that judgeth aright of things, must needs acknowledge such Providences to have as much of Mercy in them, as there is of real kindness in keeping a man from running desperately into the Fire, or casting himself into the Water. And yet men that are strongly bent to go on in ways of sin, are of another mind ; they count it their happiness to meet with nothing to retard their course, but to be permitted to please themselves, and gratify their Lusts without con-

controul; and their misery to be with-held from what their hearts are set upon, though it threaten the ruin and destruction of their souls.

Again; how often do men quarrel with God's most wise and gracious Providence, dispute against their Mercies, utterly dislike that condition into which God hath put them for their good, and which Infinite Wisdom and Goodness judged meetest for them? How often are men displeased with their Lot, finding so many faults with the Portion which God in great Mercy hath assigned unto them; as if any thing had been better than what God hath done for them?

And lastly, How many of our Mercies, which at first we were much affected with, and thought we could never be sensible enough of, and thankful enough for, have afterwards by degrees slipt out of our minds, and at length been perfectly forgotten! In short, this our forgetfulness of God's Mercies is so great and so general, that he is a rare man, and one of a thousand, that hath not forgotten many more of God's Mercies than he remembers.

Now this our forgetfulness of Mercies is so much the worse, and accordingly we are to be so much the more deeply humbled for it, if it hath been attended, as often 'tis, with these aggravations.

(1.) If we have forgotten former Mercies, though God by heaping new Mercies upon us from time to time, hath often in effect by such gracious Providences called upon us to remember them, and done enough to mind us of them. With Men a new kindness doth often revive the memory of former kindneses that had been almost forgotten. And so should God's new Favours mind us of the old, long-since received, but too little minded.

(2.) If we have forgotten God's Mercies, though they were such, and so great, so extraordinary and remarkable for the circumstances of them, as we hoped we should never forget them; yea, purposed, resolved, and promised, that we would never forget them.

(3.) If we have not only forgotten the Mercies of God, but walk'd unsuitably to them, and as mostly 'tis when we forget Mercies, if instead of rendring unto God according to the benefits received from him, we have made him ill requitals of the good which he hath done to us. Where these aggravations of our forgetfulness of Mercies have been, it concerns us to be so much the more affected with it, and humbled for it.

*Use 2.* Let us then be exhorted to take all the care we can that God's Mercies vouchsafed to us be not forgotten: And to  
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the end we may be the more careful to keep them in mind,

Let us consider 1. That God keeps an exact account of all the Mercies which he hath bestowed on us, and remembers them whether we remember them or no. Tho' we forget them, he hath them all upon record by him, and we may hear of them, when and where we would not. When *David* had incurred the high displeasure of God by his foul and scandalous sins relating to *Bathsheba* and *Uriah*, God by the Prophet *Nathan* reproving and threatening him for it, aggravates his Sin by reckoning up the Mercies that he had received; *I anointed thee king over Israel, saith the Lord, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; and I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosome; and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah: and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thy house,* 2 Sam. 12. 7, 8, 9, 10.

And so reproving and threatening *Eli* for his fond and sinful indulgence towards his Children, he also sets forth the greatness of his and their Sins, by the recital of those



those great and eminent Favours which he had conferred on his Family ; *There came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt, in Pharaoh's house? And did I chuse him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an Ephod before me? Did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel? Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice, and at my offering, which I have commanded in my habitation, and honourest thy sons above me, to make your selves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people? Wherefore the Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father should walk before me for ever: but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed,* 1 Sam. 2. 27, 28, 29, 30. Thus in like manner, may your Mercies, though you forget them, be remembered against you, and come in as so many aggravations of your sins, when God shall reckon with you for them.

2. Your own Conscience will one day mind you of the Mercies which you now forget. In an evil day, when God comes to visit for sin, when troubles and afflictions befall you, then your own Conscience will bring

bring your Mercies as well as your Sins to remembrance, and set them in order before you. Then perhaps nothing will more deeply wound your soul, than the remembrance of those Mercies which you have sinned against, and your horrible ingratitude in slighting such obligations to obedience.

3. The great advantages of our keeping the Mercies of God in mind, should make us careful not to forget them.

(1.) The remembrance of Mercies received, is a means for strengthening our Faith and Dependance on God for the future. Our Faith often fails us, and we are at a loss in our straits, and know not how to cast our selves on God, and rely on him for succour, because we have forgotten what he hath formerly done for us. You are full of trouble, and, it may be, full of unbelief and distrust of God's Providence, because your supplies fail you, and succors come not in to you in your need: But in the mean time you forget how often you have been in the like straits, and how God hath graciously provided for you. You forget how seasonably and unexpectedly Supplies have come in when your extremities have been greatest, and how often he hath prevented you with his Loving-kindness, and done for you exceeding abundantly above any thing that you were able to ask

or

or think. If you could but bear in mind what God hath heretofore upon many occasions done for you, and consider it, you would find it much more easy to depend on him, and expect relief from him in your straits.

(2.) The remembrance of former Mercies is a powerful motive and inducement to Obedience. This motive *Samuel* made use of when he would engage the *Israelites* to the service of God, *serve him in truth and with all your heart*, said he; *for consider how great things he hath done for you*, 1 Sam. 12.

24. When Mercies have not this effect, God takes it very ill at our hands, and complains of it as of so ill a requital as he cannot endure. *Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked; he forsook God that made him, and hath lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation*, Deut. 32. 15. *They say not in their heart, Let us fear God that giveth rain, the former and the latter in his season; he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest*, Jer. 5.

24. The Mercies of God are those cords of a man, those bands of love, of which he speaks *Hos. 11. 4*. But what force is there in these cords of a Man to draw us to Obedience, in these bands of Love to engage us, and, as it were, to bind us to our Duty, if the Mercies of God be forgotten, or if they be seldom or never called to mind and thought on?

(3.) The Mercies of God if remembred and minded ; do greatly strengthen and confirm us against temptations to sin ; this it was that confirmed *Joseph* against the Temptations of his Mistriss, *Behold*, said he, *my master wotteth not what is with me in the house; and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; there is none greater in this house than I, neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife; How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?* Sin against God who had done so much for him, in giving him to find such favour in the Eyes of his Master, and to be so far intrusted by him, *Gen. 39. 8, 9.* And thus *Ezra* in his Prayer argues from the Mercy of God, to engage himself and that People to cleave unto God, and not to suffer themselves to be drawn off from him ; *Seeing thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserved, and hast given us such a deliverance as this, Should we again break thy covenant, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations?* *Ezr. 9. 13, 14.* Every man knows, or should know, what temptations he is most frequently assaulted with, where he is weakest and least able to make resistance. Now to fortify him against such temptations whensoever he meets with them, it were of no small advantage to him, if he could have always in a readiness some special Mercies

Mercies of God, that by the help of them he might break the force of his Temptations; reasoning as *Joseph* and *Ezra* did, How can I do such or such a thing, and sin against God who hath been so signally gracious to me? After the receipt of such Mercies and Deliverances Should I again thus offend him? What horrible ingratitude were it in me to venture upon sin, lying under such engagements to Obedience? *Should I thus requite the Lord* my God; Foolish Creature and unwise? Surely if there be any spark of ingenuity in you towards God, this way of reasoning would blunt the edge of temptations. He must be miserably weak, or strangely bent to sin, whom this reasoning and arguing from the Mercies of God would not have some considerable influence upon, to keep him from closing with temptations.

4. The remembrance of our Mercies, and the frequent thoughts of them, would make us patient under Afflictions; for calling to mind in our troubles how many ways we formerly had experience of God's loving-kindness, we would reason with *Job*, chap. 2. 10. *Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?* That man must be very unreasonable who would not take some crosses in good part, when coming upon him by his wise disposal who had been so many ways good to him.

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5. The remembrance of Mercies received, would further our humiliation for sin. For as our Mercies do much aggravate our sins, so the recounting of them, and the serious thoughts of our great unkindness and disingenuity in sinning against such Mercies, would increase our sorrow for sin. Hence, when God would convince a people of their sins and humble them, he expostulates with them from the consideration of his Favours conferred on them; so *Deut. 32. 6. Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is not he thy father that hath bought thee? Hath he not made and established thee?* So *Jer. 2. 31. Have I been a barren wilderness unto Israel, or a land of darkness? Wherefore say my People, We are lords, we will come no more unto thee?* That is, Have I not been good and bountifull to them? Have I been wanting to them in any thing that might encourage them to serve me, and cleave unto me? How is it then that they forsake me, and betake themselves to their Idols? And surely, when we find our hearts unaffected with our sins, when we find that the consideration of our sins will not make them relent, the consideration of our Mercies would do it. The consideration of our unkindness towards God in making him such ill returns of his Mercies, would melt and dissolve our hard and stony hearts,

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if any thing will do it. Thus we have seen in how many respects it concerns us to keep in mind our Mercies, and how many ways the remembrance of them would be advantageous and beneficial to us. Now I shall add a few particulars by way of direction, in reference to our preserving the memory of our Mercies; and they are briefly these:

1. Be careful that you take notice of, and heed your Mercies; observe the Providences of God, and all his gracious dealings with you. We receive many Mercies at the hands of God while we mind them not, nor take any notice of them. We are too much like little Children, who little mind or heed what is done to them or for them, though the Mothers or Nurses care be ever exercised about them. So though God be always at work about us, doing us good one way or other, yet we are very mindless for the most part, very unobservant of what he doth for us.

2. Labour to understand your Mercies, look well into them, consider all the circumstances of them. There is many times a great deal more in our Mercies than we take notice of or discover, because we do not thoroughly view them and look into them; *Who so is wise, and will observe these things, shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord,* Psal. 107. 43.

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3. Charge

3. Charge your memories with all special Mercies, or rather, if you can, write them down, and keep a register of them, together with all the most remarkable circumstances of them.

4. Set apart some certain times to recount and call to mind the Mercies of God; to run over and review all the particulars of what God hath done for you, and be not satisfied until you have renewed the sense of those Mercies, and gotten your heart to be again affected with thankfulness to God for them, as when you first received them. If this course be taken, old Mercies will in a manner become new, and God will moreover take delight to do still more and more for you, when he sees you are not unmindful of what he hath already done, but labour to keep up in your heart a thankful remembrance thereof.

And so much concerning the Name which *Abraham* gave the place where God had been pleased to make provision of another Burnt-offering instead of *Isaac*, and the Observation thence.

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## The Fifth Sermon.

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GEN. XXII. 14.

----*As it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.*

**N**OW follows the second thing in this Verse, The Proverbial Speech that was thereupon taken up, and long continued in the mouths of men; *As it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen. To this day*, that is, till the time when *Moses* wrote this Book; for he was the Penman of it. And this could not be much less than Three hundred years after that *Abraham* received this Command to sacrifice his Son: So long was this Proverbial Speech in use with the men of those times. The words in the Original, which our Translators have rendred, *In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen*, may also be as well rendred, *In the mount the Lord shall be seen*. But which way soever we render it, whether we take the word *Jehovah*, or *Lord*, in the *Nominative* or in the *Genitive* Case, as 'tis alike capable of being taken either way,

to the sense will be the same. If we render the words with our Translators, *In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen*; the meaning is, It shall then and there be seen what God will do, and what provision he will make. And if we render the words, *In the mount the Lord will be seen*; the meaning is, That God will then and there appear to make such provision and afford such relief as to his Wisdom shall seem best. This Proverbial form of speech, as is conceived, they made use of when at any time they were in any extraordinary strait or perplexity; then they would in this form of speech, alluding to what God had done for *Abraham* in the Mount, comfort and encourage themselves, saying, *In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen*; or, *In the mount the Lord will be seen*. *In the mount*, that is, when our extremities come to be at the highest, and our straits are greatest. Now this Proverbial Speech, though it alludes to God's dealing with *Abraham* in the Mount, and was upon that occasion first taken up, yet is it not wholly grounded thereon, but also on the ordinary course of God's Providence, which the men of that Generation had observed to be very agreeable to his dealings with *Abraham*. As he stepp'd in for *Abraham's* relief in the Mount, just as he was stretching out his hand to slay his Son, and took him off, substituting another Sacrifice



in the room of *Isaac* ; so ordinarily he deals with his people ; he comes in to their succour in their greatest extremities. This, I say, they having observed to be the ordinary course of God's Providence, they took occasion to express what they had observed, in this form of words, alluding to what God had done for *Abraham* in the Mount ; saying, *In the mount the Lord will be seen.* For unless they had observed this to have been the ordinary course of God's Providence, this single Instance of God's dealing with *Abraham*, had not been enough to ground such a Proverbial speech upon. The words being thus explained, afford us this Observation ;

That God usually comes in to succour and relieve his people in their greatest extremities.

I shall give a few Instances hereof out of Scripture ; then add some Reasons of this Dispensation ; and lastly, Apply it.

There is indeed no more remarkable Instance than this of *Abraham's* being relieved in the Mount. Other Instances are, That of God's sending *Moses* and *Aaron* to bring the *Israelites* out of *Egypt*, when after many years hard Bondage under the *Egyptian* Yolk, their Miseries, and the Oppression and Cruelty of their Enemies were now at the highest ; when all their Male Children were commanded to be drowned ;

when unmerciful Taskmasters were set over them, who should exact from them the whole Tale of Brick which they had been wont to make, and cruelly beat them if it fell short, though Materials to make it were withdrawn from them, *Exod. 15.* God could have delivered them much sooner, and have prevented those extremities ; but it seemed good to his Wisdom to respite their Deliverance till their Sufferings were at the highest, and then to come in to their Succour.

So again afterwards, when they had been dismissed out of *Egypt*, the Army of the *Egyptians* pursuing them, was close behind them, the Red Sea before them, and the Mountains on both sides of them ; in this their great strait God appeared for them, miraculously dividing the Sea to make a passage for his people, and destroying their Enemies that followed them, by the return of the Waters upon them, *Exod. 14.* God could as easily have destroyed the *Egyptians* ; and rescued his people before they had been brought into that strait. But the time of their utmost extremity was God's opportunity to shew Mercy, and therefore till that time he thought fit to respite his Succours.

Another Instance hereof we have in *1 Sam. 23. 26, 27.* where we read how great a strait *David* was in, and how seasonably

sonably God relieved him in that very Juncture of time, when, unless relief had come, he had certainly fallen into the hands of his blood-thirsty Enemies. *Saul went on this side of the mountains, and David and his men on that side of the mountains; and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul; for Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about to take them. And there came a messenger unto Saul, saying, Haste thee, and come, for the Philistines have invaded the land: Wherefore Saul returned from pursuing after David, and went against the Philistines.* God, who most wisely disposeth and ordereth the circumstances of all things, caused this Messenger to be sent to recall Saul from pursuing David, just as he was now ready to seize on him, and not till then, though the *Philistines* might have invaded the Land sooner, and this Messenger might have come to call back Saul before David had been in that strait. But that season of David's extremity, was the hour unto which God had reserved that relief which he intended he should have.

Another Instance may be that of the Widow of *Zarephath*, *1 Kings 17. 10, 11, 12.* who thus represents her sad condition, by means of the Famine that was then in the land. When the Prophet *Elijah* bids her fetch him a little Water, and bring him a Morsel of Bread in her hand, she replies,  
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*I have not a cake, but only an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oyl in a cruse, and behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and dye. But in this her utmost extremity, when now she was dressing the last of that small Provision which she had to keep her self and her Son alive, the Prophet is sent to tell her from the Lord, That the barrel of meal should not waste, nor the cruse of oyl fail, until the day that the Lord would send rain upon the earth.*

I shall add but one Instance more, and 'tis that which we have in the 12th. Chapter of the *Acts of the Apostles*, concerning *Peter's deliverance*. *Herod the King* having slain *James* with the Sword, and perceiving that the *Jews* were pleased with it, to gratify them further he apprehends *Peter* also, and casts him into Prison, where he was kept for some time. From the time of his Imprisonment, *Prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him*; but still he was kept in Prison, and nothing was done for him in answer to all those Prayers, till the very night before *Herod* intended to have brought him forth to the people, and to have put him to death. In that very night, and not till then, was he set at liberty, and released by an Angel, the miraculous circumstances of which his Deliverance, are at large described in that Chapter.

Thus

Thus you have had several Instances of God's coming in to succour and relieve his in their greatest extremities, being then especially a *very present help to them in their trouble*, as *David* speaks, *Psalms* 46. 1.

Now in the second place, I proceed to give the Reasons of this Dispensation, at least to mention some of them. And I shall place them in two ranks, that I may avoid confusion; first shewing why God respits his relief so long, till a time of greatest extremity; and secondly, Why he then at length affords relief.

Concerning the former of these, God usually respits the relief of his people in their troubles so long,

1. That he may thereby exercise their Faith and Patience. There is but small Trial of Faith, little exercise thereof in those Afflictions that are quickly over, and never come to any extremity; and as little trial or exercise of Patience is there in such cases. A little Faith and a little Patience may hold out, where Trials are neither long continued, nor extreme. Wherefore God, who is infinitely wise, knowing how needful and beneficial it is unto us, that the Faith of his People should be exercised thoroughly, and their Patience have *its perfect work*, often draws out their Afflictions to a very great length, and lets them still go on, till they come to be so high that they



they can hardly go any higher, before he sends relief. That God by the Temptations and Trials of his people, intends the exercise and improvement of these two Graces, we may see, *James* 1. 2, 3, 4. And he that understands the true value and worth of these Graces, will not think the increase and improvement of them to be dearly bought, though the Afflictions which in order thereunto he undergoes be long and sharp, and rise at last to that extremity, beyond which scarce any thing could have been.

2. Another reason why God respits the relief of his people so long, is, that he may carry them on in Prayer, that they may offer up many Prayers to him in order to their deliverance; that they may pray much before they obtain relief, and more and more fervently and unceasingly still, as their Trials rise higher and higher: And all this, that after so many Prayers they may have more full and comfortable Returns at last, as it was in the case of those Christians that prayed so much and so long for *Peter's* relief: In answer to so many Prayers he had at length his release immediately from Heaven in an extraordinary and miraculous way.

3. God is pleased to respite the relief of his people so long, that they may in the mean time be more soundly humbled for their  
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their sins, and more thoroughly sensible of their utter unworthiness of that Mercy which they are waiting upon him for. To get the heart to be thoroughly humbled is no easy matter ; this is a work that goes slowly on, as every man's own experience will tell him, when he sets about it ; 'tis not the work of a day or two, it must be done by little and little, and therefore time is necessary for the carrying on and perfecting of it. And seeing easy and gentle applications make little or no impression upon our stony hearts, for the breaking and humbling of them, 'tis requisite that something of an extraordinary nature be made use of ; for the most part till we are much straitned and sorely put to it, till we come to be urged with extremities, our hearts will not yield or relent.

4. Another reason why God respites the relief of his People so long, why he doth not come in sooner to their succour, and prevent their extremities, is, that he may take off their hearts from all their dependence on the Creature for help, and he may strip them of all their carnal confidences ; that when things are come to that pass, and their extremities are such, that now they see there is none else in all the world that can relieve them but God, they may no longer look to the Mountains or the Hills for succour, but their *expectation may*  
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*be from God, and from him only, as the Psalmist speaks, Psal. 62 5.* So carnal are we, that we rather chuse to rely on any thing else than God, as long as we have any thing else to rest on : But in our extremity all other props and supports being removed, we are necessitated to betake our selves to God, and expect relief from him, who alone is able to afford it us.

And so much concerning the reasons why God respits the relief of his People so long, and doth not prevent their extremities by coming in sooner to their succour.

In the Second place, Why doth God then afford them relief? Why doth he do it in their greatest extremities?

*A.* He makes choice of that time to relieve them, no doubt, because 'tis the fittest season. And the fittest season 'tis in many respects, as may, in part, be gathered from what hath been spoken.

1. In their greatest extremities they are most humble. Their afflictions bring their sins to remembrance, and make them judge and loathe themselves for them ; and this they do most effectually, most sincerely and heartily, when their straits are greatest. Now men are most fit for deliverance when they are most humble. Mercy never comes in more seasonable, it never finds men in a meeter posture to entertain it, than when they are putting their  
mouths

mouths in the dust, and abhorring themselves for all their evil ways. This frame of the heart God chiefly looks after, and hath respect unto when he comes to shew Mercy ; He will *save the humble person*, Job 22. 29. *He hears the desire of the humble*, Psal. 10. 17. *And forgetteth not the cry of the humble*, Psal. 9. 12. *He that humbleth himself shall be exalted*, Matth. 23. 12. *Humble your selves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up*, James 4. 10. And again, *Humble your selves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time*, 1 Pet. 5, 6.

2. In their greatest extremities they Pray most fervently. In lesser afflictions they Pray, but in their extremities they Cry unto God for help, as the *Israelites* did *Exod. 14. 10.* when they were at the *Red Sea*, and the *Egyptians* were close behind them. Thus our Saviour in the extremity of the anguish of his Soul in his Agony, *Offered up prayers and supplications to his Father with strong crying and tears*, Heb. 5. 7. Extremity of affliction puts an accent upon the Prayers of God's People, and makes them not only cry, but *cry aloud* for succour, as *David* in his straits was wont to do, *Psal. 55. 16, 17.* Now though cold and drowsy Prayers do not speed so well, yet there is a wonderful efficacy in fervent Prayers to prevail with God for relief, *James 5. 16.*

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3. In their extremities their eyes are only upon God for succour, they despair of it any other way, and therefore all their dependance is on him, and all their expectation is from him. Now God is not wont to fail men, when renouncing and disclaiming all other succours, they rely on him alone, and roll themselves intirely on his Power, Goodness, and Faithfulness. Upon much experience of God's never failing such as thus depend on him it is that the *Psalmist* saith, *They that know thy name will put their trust in thee, for thou hast not forsaken them that seek thee*, Psal. 9. 10.

4. In the greatest extremities of God's People, his succours are most sweet and comfortable; and therefore to commend his Mercies to them, he takes that time to shew Mercy. God so much consults the comfort of his People, that he is graciously pleased to order the time and other circumstances of his Mercies, as they may best relish them, taste most sweetness in them, and take the greatest content and satisfaction in them.

5. God comes in to succour and relieve his People in their greatest extremities, because this is most suitable to his compassionate and merciful disposition. He is a Father to his; a Father not in name only, but in reality, as being affected with a most tender paternal Love to them; *as a Father pitieth*



*pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him, Psalm 103. 13.* And hence it is that he pitieth them most, and is most ready to succour and relieve them in their greatest necessities and highest exigencies, provided that they carry and demean themselves in any measure suitable unto their relation to him, and as becomes his Children.

6. He makes choice of the season of their greatest extremities to relieve them, because then he hath the fittest opportunity of displaying the glory of his Power, Wisdom, Goodness, Truth, and Faithfulness in their relief. The greater their straits are, and the less visible ground of hope of relief there is from any Creature, the more will the glory of these his Attributes shine forth in his appearing for them, and helping them in such difficult and desperate circumstances, as in which it was apparent that relief, if ever they obtained it, must come immediately from himself.

7. God comes in to relieve his People in their greatest extremities, because then, if ever, his People will give the glory of what is done for them, intirely to himself. When their straits were so great, as that it was visible to every eye, that none but God could help them, there can be no pretence or colour for taking any part of the glory

to themselves, or for conferring it upon any other Creature.

8. If the Enemies of God's Church have brought his People into that forlorn and desperate condition, desperate as to all human help, God comes in to the succour and relief of his People in their greatest extremities, and not till then, that the disappointment of their Enemies high and confident hopes and expectations may be so much the more shameful, and the utter defeating of their most politick and hopeful designs so much the more remarkable. If God should interpose in the behalf of his People earlier, and *crush the cockatrice eggs* as soon as his Churches Enemies begin to set abroad on them, their disappointment would not be so ignominious and confounding; but when he lets them alone till they are just ready to hatch what they have been long brooding on, and then steps in, crushing their designs, turning all their engines against themselves, and making them *fall by their own counsels*; when in *the things in which they dealt proudly*, he appears at last when they least fear'd it to *have been above them* (as Jethro speaks of God delivering his People out of the hand of the Egyptians, Exod. 18. 10.) when he thus rescues his People from *the very horns of the unicorn*, as David speaks, whence none but himself could have rescued them; when  
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he plucks away the Prey from between the very teeth of the Lion, this is a dispensation in which he gets him honour over his Enemies, as he *gat him honour over Pharaoh* in his overthrow, *Exod. 14. 17.* and in which the shame and confusion of their disappointment is equal to the high confidence they had of their success.

9. God comes in to succour his People in their greatest extremities, that he might not cast a damp upon their Faith, and discourage their Prayers; and that he might not open the mouths of their Enemies against them, and give them an occasion of triumphing in their misery.

1. He relieves them in their greatest extremities, that he might not cast a damp upon their Faith, and discourage their Prayers. For if God should then fail them, they would say their Faith was vain, and that their Prayers were insignificant and fruitless. They would be tempted to conclude, That there is no advantage or benefit in seeking God, in looking up to him, and depending on him; they would be tempted to think it a very indifferent thing whether they Pray or no, and whether they have recourse to God in their distresses, or to the Creature; and that they might hope to speed as well in the total neglect of their Duty, as in the most Conscientious performance of it.

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2. God comes in to succour and relieve his People in their greatest extremities, that he might not open the mouths of their Enemies, and give them an occasion of triumphing in their misery. If God should fail his People in their greatest extremities, then their Enemies would insult over them, and reproach them, saying, Where is now your God? What is become now of all your Prayers, of all your confidence in God's help, of your reliance on him, and expectation of relief from him? This proud and reproachful insultation of the Enemies of God's Church, is that which God's People have ever deprecated, and prayed against, frequent instances whereof we have in the Book of *Psalms*. And God himself even when he is much provoked by the sins of his People, yet declares that he mercifully forbears to use that severity against them which their sins deserve, lest their and his Enemies should thence take an occasion of insulting; so *Deut. 32. 26, 27. I said, I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men, were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy, and lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and say, Our hand is high, and the Lord hath not done all this.* When he saith, *Were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy,* he speaks after the manner of men; but his meaning is, that though his  
People

People had given him sufficient cause to deal most severely with them, yet he was pleased to hold his hand, and to use much greater moderation in correcting them, than otherwise he would have done, to prevent the proud insultings of their Enemies.

And thus you have had the reasons, at least some of the reasons, why God usually comes in to succour and relieve his People in their greatest extremities, and not till then. Now followeth the Application.

*Use 1.* Doth God come in to succour and relieve his People in their greatest extremities? Then we may hence be encouraged to trust in God to the uttermost, and not to cast away our confidence, or yield to despair in our forest straits. Even when all human helps fail us, and things grow worse and worse every day, let us not say, *There is no help for us in God; David's Enemies, indeed, said so of him, Psal. 3. 2. but David never said so of himself, unless when for the present under the power of some grievous temptation; when he was greatly distressed in regard the people spake of stoning him, he encouraged himself in the Lord, 1 Sam. 30. 6. And Job's resolution was, That though God should slay him, yet would he trust in him, Job 13. 15. But you will say, in cases of such extremity, What grounds of Faith and Trust in God are*

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there?



there? What foundation hath a man to support his dependance on God for relief?

A. I Answer, he hath divers:

1. No extremity can be so great in which it is not most easy with God to afford relief. If a man could ever be at that loss, that it exceeded the Power of God to help him, then indeed his case were desperate: But whatever your condition be, *Is there any thing too hard for the Lord?* Gen. 18. 14. *In his hand is there not power and might?* as Jehoshaphat pleaded with him in Prayer, 2 Chron. 20. 6. *With God nothing is impossible,* Luke 1. 37. He can do for us exceeding abundantly above what we are able to ask or think, Ephes. 3. 20.

2. As there is no such forlorn exigency in which he is not able to help us, so, as you have heard, he is wont to come in with relief when all human helps fail us. To help us at such a dead lift, is not beside the usual course of his most wise Providence; our own experience can bear witness how often he hath done for us beyond our Faith and Hope.

3. He often on purpose respits his succours till such a time of need, till we are brought into such a strait as there is no hope of relief from any other besides himself; as hath been said before, he takes that time to chuse; *The Lord shall judge his people,*  
and

*and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left, Deut. 32. 36. When he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left; That's the time he waits for, that's the proper season and opportunity of shewing Mercy, which he expects; till that time be fully come, he stands aloof off, as one unconcerned with the condition of his People, and as if he either minded not, or regarded not what they suffer.*

We read *John 11.* That when Christ was informed that *Lazarus, whom he loved, was sick*, he made no haste to go to him, but *abode two days still in the same place where he was, v. 6.* and afterwards when he knew him to be dead, he said to his Disciples, *I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent that ye may believe, v. 15.* neither after this did he hasten to the place where he died; for when at length he came to the Grave, *Martha said unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days, v. 39.* Thus we see, though Christ intended from the first to comfort and relieve *Mary and Martha* in their Affliction, yet he came not in to relieve them all the time of their Brother's Sickneſs, nor till four days after he had been Dead; when now they were utterly hopeless of any relief from him, he purposely

kept off, and came not near them till they made account 'twas now too late; if he had come sooner, *their brother had not died*, say they, v. 21, 32. but now that he was dead, and had been so long dead as it might be supposed his Body must by that time stink, all hopes of his reviving were gone, and then he steps in, and magnifies his Power and Goodness towards his Servants.

4. Whatever our straits are, and how much soever it be beyond the reach of any Creature in the world to afford us relief, God, as he is most able to help us, and as 'tis not unusual with him then to do it, and as he often on purpose respits our relief till such a difficult season, so he will then most certainly relieve us, as far as shall be for his own Glory and our Good. Hereof sufficient assurance is given us by all those general Promises which God hath made to his People, of Relief and Deliverance in trouble, as also by many special Promises made in reference to extraordinary cases and great extremities. Such Promises, or gracious Declarations which are virtually Promises, and afford us the same ground of Faith and Dependance on God, as formal and express Promises do; I say such are these that follow, *The Lord will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble*, Psal. 9. 9. *The needy shall not always be forgotten, the expectation*

peccation of the poor shall not perish for ever, Psalm 9. 18. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry. The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles, Psalm 34. 15, 17. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all, Psalm 34. 19. The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord, he is their strength in the time of trouble. And the Lord shall help them and deliver them; he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them because they trust in him, Psalm 37. 39, 40. God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble, Psalm 46. 1. Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me, Psalm 50. 15. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome Pestilence: He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust; his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon-day: A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand, but it shall not come nigh thee, Psalm 91. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. Because thou hast made the Lord which is my refuge, even the most high thine habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling, v. 9, 10.

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*He shall call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, and will deliver him, v. 15. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee, Isa. 43. 2.*

Now, I say, all these Promises, and many more to be found in Scripture, afford us sufficient ground of assurance, That whatever our dangers be, he will safeguard and protect us; whatever our straits be, he will relieve and succour us; whatever our afflictions and calamities be, he will rescue and deliver us, so far as it shall be for his glory and our good. And what can we desire more? Would we be gratified, though God's Honour should suffer, and we our selves be prejudiced thereby? If we have either any regard of his Honour, or any true love to our selves, we will neither wish nor accept of that which we call deliverance, upon such terms. Thus we have seen the grounds we have of trusting in God to the uttermost, and of depending on him for relief in our greatest extremities: How desperate and forlorn soever our condition may be, he is able to relieve us; there is no restraint to his Almighty Power and Infinite Wisdom; neither is it unusual with him to succour his in their greatest distresses;



distresses; he often doth it; yea, he often doth it then to chuse, and purposely respits and reserves his succours till our extremest necessities; and lastly, then he will most certainly come in to succour us, provided that it be consistent with his glory and our good.

*Use 2.* Doth God come in to succour and relieve his people in their greatest extremities? And doth he often upon so many accounts, and for so many wise and gracious ends, respit the succours of his people in their distresses, till such a difficult and perilous season? Then let us be contented to wait till God's appointed time for relieving us in our respective troubles and afflictions be fully come. In our own Personal Concernments, and in those also of the Church and State, let us be willing to be at God's disposal for the time and season of deliverance: And though he make us expect long, yet let us not give way either to discouragement or impatience. Though instead of that desirable issue of our troubles which we earnestly long for, we should meet with new difficulties and perplexities every day, yet let not all this put us out of heart, or make us weary of waiting. The more dark and cloudy the face of things is, the sooner will they be at the worst; and when once they are at the worst, then mostly is God's opportunity to step in and relieve us.

*Use*

*Use 3.* Doth God come in to succour and relieve his people in their greatest extremities? O then be persuaded to make God your Friend ; labour to get an interest in his favour, who can help you when none else in all the world can, and who will not fail to succour you, when your necessity shall be such as it most calls for his help. How would a man prize such a Friend ! At what rate would he not purchase him !

*Use 4.* Having gotten an interest in his favour, keep in with him ; see there be no breaches between him and you ; walk humbly with him ; have respect to all his Commandments ; allow not you self in any sin ; do nothing that may provoke him to displeasure against you, nothing that may hide his face from you, or cause any distance or alienation between him and you. If you wilfully offend him, and walk contrary to him, how can you with any boldness go to him, or with any confidence expect relief from him in your troubles ! He hath told us what we may expect at his hands, if we carry our selves undutifully towards him, and if our Conversation be not in some measure answerable unto our relation to him. . *If we walk contrary to him, he will also walk contrary to us, Levit. 26. 23, 24. He will be with us while we are with him ; if we seek him, he will be found of us ; but if we forsake him, he will forsake us ; as the Prophet*

phet *Azariah* told *Afa* and his people, *2 Chron. 15. 2.* If men care not how they carry themselves towards God, as they will thereby certainly bring troubles upon themselves, so when *they cry unto him* for help in their misery, *he will not hear them; he will hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings,* Micah 3. 4. And thus I should have done with this Point, but that there are two or three Questions, unto which I shall speak briefly, before I go on to what follows in the Text.

*Quest. 1.* In perilous times, such as these are in which we live; in times when we are full of dangers and fears, as not knowing what Calamities may surprize us, what Miseries may be ready to overtake us, What is to be done by men that are under these fears and sad apprehensions of approaching evils, that they may warrantably expect God's appearance for them in their extremities?

*Ans.* I answer in the general, They must labour to be in a meet posture to receive so great a Mercy at the hands of God. More particularly,

1. They must humble themselves for their own particular sins, and the sins of those about them, and endeavour to reform what hath been amiss in themselves and theirs. Neither must they rest there, they must

must also take to heart and bewail the sins of the places where they live, and the sins of the whole Land. When the Lord had determined to let in a furious and merciless Enemy upon *Jerusalem*, for the most horrid sins thereof, who had a Commission to slay Old and Young, and shew no pity to any Age or Sex, he took order that a *mark* should be set upon the forehead of all those who did sigh and cry for all the abominations that were done in the midst thereof; and he gave a special charge that the Executioners of his Wrath should *not come near any man on whom was the mark*, Ezek. 9. 4, 5, 6. By which we are given to understand, That in times of general Calamities and Publick Judgments, God hath a special care of those who have taken to heart and sincerely lamented and mourned over the sins of the Land of their Nativity, and the respective places where God hath appointed to them the bounds of their Habitations.

2. They must give themselves much unto Prayer. He that prays much ( I speak now especially of secret Prayer ), he that prays without ceasing, as the Apostle speaks, *1 Thess. 5. 17.* he needs not disquiet and distract himself with the anxious and solicitous thoughts of what may be coming on the Land. God who *is rich in mercy to all those that call upon him*, Rom. 10. 12, 13. will some way or other provide a Sanctua-

ry and an hiding-place for such a one, whatever storms may be coming upon us. *The Lord will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble; and they that know thy name will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee,* Psalm 9. 9, 10. *The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth; he will fulfil the desire of them that fear him; he will also hear their cry, and will save them,* Psalm 145. 18, 19.

3. They must commit themselves unto God, and resign themselves up to his disposal. This we are allowed and commanded to do in dangerous and calamitous times. *Let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him, as unto a faithful creator,* 1 Pet. 4. 19. And so doing, we need not question but that he will undertake for us, and secure us in such ways, and so far as to his Wisdom shall seem best. That is supposed, and necessarily implied, when he bids them commit themselves unto him. For what man would say to his Friend or Neighbour, Commit your self to me, unless he meant to take care of him and of his Concernments? If he intended no such matter, to bid him commit himself to him, were but to betray him. Besides, the Apostle adds that by which he implies that God's Faithfulness is engaged to keep those who commit them-

selves



selves unto him. Let them *commit the keeping of their souls to God, as unto a faithful creator.* Add hereunto those other express Promises; *Cast your care upon the Lord, for he careth for you, 1 Pet. 5. 7. Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee; he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved, Psalm 55. 22. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusted in thee. Trust in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength, Isa. 26. 3, 4.*

4. They must diligently and conscientiously attend on the duties of that Place and Calling in which God hath set them. *Commit the keeping of your souls to him in well-doing, saith St. Peter, in the place before-mentioned.* So *Psalm 37. 3. Trust in the Lord and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.* Whatever Calamities may be hanging over our heads; in what way of Providence soever God may be coming on towards us, 'tis good and safe to be found in God's way, and duly employed in that work which he hath assigned us. *Blessed is the servant whom his master when he cometh, shall find so doing, Luke 12. 43.* And this may suffice to have been said in answer to that Question.

*Quest. 2.* Having done their best endeavour to put themselves in this posture, How far may they warrantably expect  
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God's appearing for them in their greatest extremities?

*Ans.* 'Tis impossible to define precisely, and punctually to set down how far they may. For God hath not so tied up himself by any Promise, or voluntary Engagement whatsoever, but that he is still at liberty in some cases to vary as he sees good, from the ordinary and more usual course of his Providence. 'Tis true, he hath promised in the place before-mentioned, to be with his people when they pass through the Waters, that they may not overflow them; and to be with them when they walk through the Fire, that the flame kindle not upon them: And yet many of his own people have been drowned, and many have been burnt to ashes. He hath commanded his people to call upon him in the day of trouble, promising to deliver them: And yet many of his have suffered the same evils which they prayed to be delivered from; and among them, even Christ himself drank of the Cup which he prayed might pass away from him. God hath declared that he is a present help in trouble; and yet many of his people have perished in their troubles, as to their outward man, and all their temporal concerns. We must not therefore so deceive our selves, as to fancy that we have from these and the like Scriptures any sufficient ground of an

absolute confidence that our fears shall not come upon us. Only thus far we may safely go,

1. In the general : The more careful we have been to order our Conversation aright, and to walk with God in the course of our lives, and the better posture we shall be found in when the evil day comes, and when our dangers are at the highest, the more signally gracious may we hope to find God's dealing with us when we shall most stand in need of his being to us a present help in trouble.

2. As to particulars: How, in what manner, and how far, as to outward things, we shall at such a time find favour in the eyes of God, is absolutely impossible for man to determine. God's ways of shewing Mercy are so various, his Providence so wonderful, his Wisdom so vast and incomprehensible, his Power so infinite and boundless, his Judgments so unsearchable, his Ways so past finding out; and lastly, our Capacity so weak, and our Understanding so narrow, that it were the greatest Rashness and the most intolerable Boldness in the world, for any mortal man to take upon him to say how, by what means, in what particular circumstances, in what measure and manner God will be gracious to his people as to these temporal things.

3. But

3. But this however we are or may be sure of, That he will do for them what is every way best, and what is most suitable and agreeable to that Infinite Wisdom and Goodness that sits at the Stern, and governs the World; and that he will most certainly cause all things to work together for good to them. And surely this, if firmly believed, and steadily adhered to, will satisfy and quiet us amidst all our fears; if it do not, I know not what will or can do it. And so much by way of Answer to that Question.

*Quest.* 3. But why doth God sometimes leave his own people to miscarry together with the wicked in those common Calamities that befall the places where they live?

*Ans.* 1. They do never utterly miscarry. They do never miscarry as to their better part, their Souls. God ever secures their Souls into his own Barn, whatever Tempest it is that brings them thither.

2. As for their being sharers in the same outward sufferings with wicked men, possibly they came too near to them, and complied too much with them in sin, and so God thought fit they should partake with them in those Calamities which for sin he inflicts.

3. It may be that God will have some Instances of the sufferings of his people together with the wicked, and of their drink-

ing of the same Cup, for the hardening of wicked men ; and that seeing they would receive no benefit by the good Example of their holy Lives and unblameable Conversations, they may through the wickedness of their own hearts take much hurt by their sufferings.

4. God who is infinitely Wise, hath ways of bringing good out of evil, and of turning the greatest evils that befall his people here, to their advantage if they survive them ! And if they do not survive those Calamities, perhaps they are taken away from the evil to come, from some greater evil that would have come upon them, if their timely death had not prevented it. However, they are by the kindness of a Storm driven into the Harbour, and safely landed in Heaven, where they are without the reach of all those Calamities which this life is subject to.

And so much concerning the Issue of *Abraham's* extraordinary Trial ; which was the Third Thing in this short Account or History of his Trial.



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## The Sixth Sermon.

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GEN. XXII. 15, 16, 17, 18.

*And the Angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, By my self have I sworn, saith the Lord; for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, That in blessing, I will bless thee, and in multiplying, I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.*

**I**N the last place now comes to be considered the high Acceptance which Abraham's Obedience found with God, in the 15th. 16th. 17th. 18th. Verses: *And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, By my self*  
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have.

*have I sworn, saith the Lord; for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, That in blessing, I will bless thee, and in multiplying, I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore: And thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies. And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.*

In which Words God was pleased to testify the high Acceptance that *Abraham's* Obedience found with him, by a Promise of fundry great and extraordinary Blessings, as a Reward thereof. In this Promise there are these Three things considerable; the Manner or Form of it; the Matter of it; and the Ground of it.

1. The Manner or Form of it; 'tis not a bare Promise, but a Promise ratified and confirmed by an Oath, and that from Heaven: *The angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven, and said, By my self have I sworn, saith the Lord.*

2. The Matter of the Promise, or the things promised; *In blessing, I will bless thee, and in multiplying, I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.*

3. The Ground of the Promise, or the Occasion of it; *Because thou hast done this thing,*

*thing, and hast not with-held thy son, thine only son.*

As for the first of these, The Form or Manner of the Promise ; it was not a bare Promise, but a Promise ratified and confirmed by the solemnity of an Oath from Heaven. In which Oath two things seem to have been intended ; the Manifestation of the high Acceptance which *Abraham's* Obedience had with God ; and the Confirmation of the Promise.

1. The Oath of God shews the great Acceptance which *Abraham's* Obedience had with God. For not only to promise great things as a Reward of his Obedience, but most solemnly to swear by himself that such things he would do for him, and confer upon him, because he had obeyed his voice, plainly demonstrates his Obedience to have been highly acceptable. For what clearer demonstration thereof could there have been ? 'Tis as if a Prince highly pleased with the Service which one of his Subjects had done him, should not only promise, but by a solemn Oath bind himself to confer some honourable Reward upon him.

2. The other thing intended in this Oath, was the Confirmation of the Promise. So the Apostle speaking of this very Promise made to *Abraham*, saith, That God confirmed it by an oath, *Heb. 6. 17.*

Now though God's Word and Promise be of Infallible Truth ; though his bare Promise be as sure and stedfast, and as impossible to be broken as his Oath ; yet he is pleased thus to condescend to our infirmity, and for the strengthening of our weak Faith, to add an Oath to his Promise, as men are wont to do, when they would give full assurance to them unto whom they promise any thing, that their Promise shall be made good.

But you will say, Seeing the Promise was made unto *Abraham*, what necessity was there of adding an Oath to the Promise ? *Abraham's* Faith was very strong before this, and seems not to have needed the Oath of God to strengthen it. The Apostle speaking of the Faith he had before *Isaac* was born, saith, *He staggered not at the promise through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God*, Rom. 4. 20.

*Answ.* 1. Though *Abraham's* Faith was strong, yet it was not so strong, but that in the hour of Temptation it might be shaken, and stand in need of whatever helps God affords for the strengthening of our Faith. *Abraham*, though a rare and eminent person for Grace, and the Father of the Faithful, was not wholly exempt from being subject to the infirmities which other Believers labour under.

2. If it might be supposed that *Abraham* needed not the confirmation of God's promise by an Oath, yet it must be considered, that others were concerned in this promise as well as *Abraham*. *Isaac*, who was present, was concerned, and *Isaac's* Posterity, unto whom the promise was to be made good: And they were to undergo many hardships in *Egypt* before this promise was to be fully accomplished: They were to meet with many things that would seem to hinder the fulfilling of it, and render it very improbable to human reason, that it should ever take effect, at least as to some of the branches of it. But however, having the Oath of God for the fulfilling of it, they had enough to bear up their Faith against whatsoever might damp, discourage, or weaken it: And that it was not only for *Abraham's* sake, but for the strengthening of the Faith of Posterity, that God was pleased to confirm his promise by an oath, the Apostle, in the place before-mentioned, clearly affirms, *God willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lye, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope that is set before us,* Heb. 6. 17, 18. And though it be true that the two former branches of the promise



mise did principally, if not only concern the *Israelites*, or that part of the Posterity of the seed of *Abraham* after the flesh; yet the third branch, that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed, doth as much concern us *Gentiles* as it did them. So then the Oath is added to the promise for our sakes, and for the sake of all those of what Family or Nation soever, that shall tread in the steps of the Faith of *Abraham* to the end of the world: Wherefore if *Abraham* needed not the Oath of God for the strengthening of his Faith, certainly we do.

And a singular help for strengthening our weak Faith, and a sure and firm ground of strong consolation it is, that we have not only the Word, but the Oath of him that cannot lie, for the fulfilling of whatsoever God hath promised; this is such a security as it is utterly impossible that God himself should give us a better; wherefore having such a steadfast and immoveable foundation of our Faith and Hope, let us not cast away our confidence, let us not suffer any thing so far to prevail with us, as to make us stagger at the promise through unbelief, or in the least to question the performance of what God hath undertaken, and by a solemn Oath engaged his Almighty Power, and infallible Truth for the effecting thereof. But however, let us  
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here be very careful that we deceive not our selves ; let us be sure that our Faith be a true and a lively Faith, and not a dead Faith, and that we are so qualified as the promises suppose and require them to be who may warrantably expect to be made partakers of the good things promised. Unless we be those unto whom the promises belong, What will all the security that God hath given for making good his promises avail us who have nothing to do with them? But supposing we have true Faith and sound Repentance, to question whether God will make good his promises to us, is to question the sincerity both of his Word and Oath, and to doubt whether he may not prove guilty of the breach both of the one and the other : A thing of so horrid a nature with relation to God, as that the like could not be feared or suspected of any honest man, without the highest injury to him.

Now whereas God is here said to Swear by himself, as also often elsewhere in Scripture, the Apostle hath given us the reason thereof, *Heb. 6. 13. When God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself.*

But you will say, we find in Scripture that he doth not always Swear by himself, but often useth other forms of Swearing ; for sometimes he *swears by his holiness*, as  
*Psal.*

*Pfal.* 89. 35. and *Amos* 4. 2. *By his right hand,* *IIa.* 62. 8. *By his great name,* *Jer.* 44. 26. And *by the excellency of Jacob,* *Amos* 8. 7.

A. I Answer, Though God is pleased to use these several forms of Swearing, yet still he Swears by himself, and by none other. Thus when he Swears by his Holiness, he Swears by himself; for his Holiness, and all other his Attributes, are the same with himself; they are not Accidents as 'tis in the Creature, but they are all Essential to him. So when he Swears by *his right hand*, he Swears by his Almighty Power, which is signified by his right Hand. Thus *Ex.* 15. 6. *Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power; thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy:* That is, thou hast glorified thine Almighty Power by destroying thy proud Enemies. Thus *Psal.* 17. 7. *Shew thy marvellous loving-kindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them that put their trust in thee.* And *Psal.* 98. 1. *O sing unto the Lord a new song, for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory.* In all which places, and many more, by *the right hand of God*, we are to understand his Almighty Power: And what is the Almighty Power of God, but the Almighty and most Powerful God? So then swearing by *his right hand*, he swears by

by his Almighty Power, and Swearing by his Almighty Power he swears by himself; for his Omnipotency, or Almightyness, is essential to him, 'tis of his very Nature and Essence. So again, when he swears by *his great name*, he swears by himself; the Name of God in Scripture being frequently taken for God himself; thus when we read of knowing God's Name, *Psal. 9. 10.* of calling upon his Name, *Joel 2. 32.* of praising his Name, and of blessing his Name, *Psal. 145. 1, 2.* of trusting in his Name, *Isa. 50. 10.* of fearing his Name, *Mal. 4. 2.* and of his Name being a strong Tower into which the Righteous run and are safe, *Prov. 18. 10.* By *the Name of God* we are to understand God himself: So then when he swears by his great Name, he swears by himself. Lastly, When he swears by *the excellency of Jacob*, he swears by himself, who is the excellency of his People; their relation to him, and interest in him as their God, being that which makes them truly honourable; whence it is that God is called *the glory of his people*, *Psal. 106. 20.* where the Psalmist speaking of the Idolatry of the *Israelites*, saith, *They turned their glory into the similitude of an Ox that eateth grass*: That is, they represented God, who is their Glory, under the similitude of that Creature, and so Worshipped him.

But



But it may be here Objected, That *Amos* 6. 8. God swears by himself that he abhors the Excellency of *Jacob*; How then, when he afterwards, *chap.* 8. 7. swears by the excellency of *Jacob*, doth he swear by himself?

A. In that former place where he swears that he abhors the excellency of *Jacob*, we are to take the excellency of *Jacob* in another sense; there by the excellency of *Jacob*, we are to understand all the outward pomp and splendour of that People, their Riches, their worldly Honours, their beautiful and admired City, their stately Houses and magnificent Palaces; yea, all their outward Spiritual Priviledges. When God being extremely provoked by their Sins, should come to reckon with them for all their Abominations, he would have no more regard of any of these things, than of what he hates and abhors; none of these things should plead for them, he would deliver their City and all that was therein, all their Riches, their goodly Palaces, their stately furniture, yea, the Temple it self whereof they gloried, into the Enemies hand, to be at the will and pleasure of an enraged and merciless Conquerour. This it is which in that place is meant by the abhorring the excellency of *Jacob*. May their condition never be the condition of this place. You have since  
the



the Fire gotten you a beautiful Town, goodly Buildings, and fine Houses, and you are through God's great Mercy to you, once more in a good way of Trade; but your sins, if not repented of and forsaken, will soon blast all the beauty of this place, and make God hate and abhor all the excellency thereof; none of these fine things shall be able to secure you from the Judgments of God, if you still go on to provoke him. Yea, all that God hath done for you in restoring you, and raising you up out of the Ashes to this degree of Beauty and Splendour, will but plead against you, and add weight to your Punishment, if you still go on in your Trespases; your continuance in your sins and impenitency, after so much Severity and so much Mercy, would give your Transgressions the highest aggravations they are capable of, and make you ripe for some heavier Judgment than that which hath been lately upon you.

And here let no Man say, That Judgment was such as you need not fear any thing of a more dreadful nature. He who hath threatned to punish incorrigible Sinners after great Severities and fearful Judgments, yet seven times, and seven times, and seven times more for their sins, *Levit. 26.* hath yet greater, and greater, and greater Plagues in store for such an obstinate

*This is spoken to the People of Northampton.*

nate People: Though he hath shot his Arrows among us, yet he hath not emptied his Quiver, he hath still other arrows left, and those dipt in Poyson, that shall rankle and torment you more than any thing that you have hitherto suffer'd. I beseech you consider it, and lay it to heart, so lay it to heart, as by your found Humiliation, and sincere Reformation, to avert those Miseries which else you will have just cause to fear.

So from the form of the promise, I come to the matter of it, or the things promised; *In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand that is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.*

Where we see, that though there be three great things which God promised to do for him, yet they all relate to his Seed; his Seed should be wonderfully multiplied; his seed should possess the gates of his enemies; and in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed. Abraham in Obedience to God was willing to give up his seed to him, to Sacrifice Isaac his Son: And God takes it so well at his hands, that he doth not only give him back what he was so ready upon his account, and for his sake to part with, providing another Sacrifice instead of

*Isa. 16,*

*Isaac*, but adds moreover, the promise of these great Blessings relating to his Seed and posterity that should descend from *Isaac*.

Whence we may observe these two things :

1. That we are no losers by our willingness to part with any thing upon God's account. God considers the losses we sustain, or are but willing to sustain for his sake, and makes us abundant recompense : That promise of our Saviour is well known, *Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life,* Matth. 19. 29. wherefore they understand not their own interest who stick at foregoing any thing when God calls them to part with it ; they can no way better consult their own advantage, than by freely giving up any thing, how dear soever it be to them, when God calls them to do it. If this were thoroughly believed, men would not so draw back, and struggle to hold fast that which God would have them let go. 'Tis true, we may prize our Mercies, and value them according to the worth of them ; yea, we ought to prize them, provided that we do not overprize them, and set an higher rate upon them than God would have us ; which in Temporal Mer-

cies we are very apt to do, but in Spiritual Mercies the only danger is, lest we undervalue them. And as we must prize our Mercies, so we must keep them and preserve them; it were our sin to throw them away when we need not; but yet we must not hug them and hold them fast when God will have us part with them.

Therein we should both displease God, and prejudice our selves: As God cannot take it well at our hands that we oppose our selves against his Providence, so we gain nothing by it in the end, but the rendering away of those things from us to our greater pain and smart, which we grasped so fast, and endeavoured with so much force to hold back, when God would pull them away from us.

2. Another thing which we may thence observe is, That God sometimes rewards the obedience of his Servants in the same kind in which they have been obedient to him. If *Abraham* be willing to part with his *seed*, and to give up his Son *Isaac* to God in obedience to his command, God will greatly multiply and otherwise bless his seed. For his willingness to part with one Son, he shall have many, his Offspring and Posterity shall be as *the stars of heaven*, and as *the sand that is upon the sea shore*. Thus if *David* be willing to build God an house, God will build him an house,  
1 Chron.

1 Chron. 17. 10. If men honour the Lord with their substance, and with the first fruits of all their increase, God will bless their substance, and add to their increase; their barns shall be filled with plenty, and their presses shall burst out with new wine, Prov. 3. 9, 10. and he that watereth others, shall be watered also himself, Prov. 11. 25. Now God is thus pleased to suit his rewards to the nature and quality of the services which he doth reward, to the end the Persons so rewarded may the better discern God's meaning in those his gracious Providences, and that they may better understand that the Mercies which they receive at the hands of God were intended as rewards of their Obedience; which thing when they clearly see, they have the more comfort in those good things which appear to have been intended as rewards of their service; they are the more thankful for them, and they are the more encouraged to serve God faithfully for the future. Besides, God thus suits his rewards to the nature and quality of the services rewarded, that others may take notice how good and bountiful he is to such as sincerely obey him, and be thereby also encouraged to the service of so gracious and bountiful a Master.

All the Use that I shall make of this Observation, is only this; It may teach us



carefully to mind and observe all the gracious Providences of God towards us; to view and consider all the circumstances of his Mercies, that we may thereby discern what special relation any of them have to any particular services in which God hath been pleased to make use of us. *He that will observe these things, shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord,* as the Psalmist speaks, *Psalms 107. 43.* He shall often take notice and discern how exactly God suits and proportions his rewards to the quality and the very circumstances of the services which have been done him. But he that heeds not, considers not what God hath done for him, understands not God's intentions in many of the Mercies he receives, and so he loseth much of the comfort of them, and much of the advantage they would afford him towards the heightning of his Thankfulness, and the encouragement of his Obedience.

And this may suffice to have been spoken of the Matter of the Promise, or the things promised in the general, as they all relate to *Abraham's Seed.*

I now go on to speak of the particular Mercies promised, in the same order in which they are mentioned in the Text.

The first thing promised, is, *That in multiplying God would multiply his seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand that is upon the sea-shore.* In

*In multiplying he would multiply his seed;* that is, he would certainly and greatly multiply it; for that is the import of that Phrase with the *Hebrews*. So *Gen. 2. 17.* *In the day that thou eatest thereof* (namely, of the forbidden fruit) *in dying thou shalt dye* (so 'tis in the Original), that is, *thou shalt surely dye*. So again, *Gen. 37. 33.* *Joseph without doubt is rent in pieces;* or, *he is surely rent in pieces;* where in the Original the words are, *Teroph Toraph*, in rending in pieces he is rent in pieces; that is, He is altogether and certainly rent in pieces. Another Instance hereof we have, *Exod. 19. 13.* where God speaking of the Punishment of him that at the giving of the Law should come near the Mount and touch it, saith, *Sekol jiskol*, *In stoning he shall be stoned*, that is, *he shall certainly be stoned*, and be stoned thoroughly and effectually, he shall be stoned till he dye. And so much concerning the meaning of that Phrase, *In multiplying I will multiply thy seed*. As for those expressions that follow, *I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand upon the sea-shore*, they are added by way of further amplification of the Promise; and all that we are to understand by them is only this, That God would so wonderfully multiply his Offspring, that the Increase of his Posterity should be even incredible. In the usual language of the Scriptures, any huge

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or vast multitude is thus described. So *Josh. 11. 4.* the Host of the several Kings and Countries that combined against the *Israelites*, is said to have been *even as the sand that is upon the sea-shore in multitude.* So in the description of the Army that was overcome by *Gideon*, *Judg. 7. 12.* 'tis said, *That the Midianites, and the Amalekites, and all the children of the East, lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude, and their camels without number, as the sand that is by the sea-side for multitude.* The like is said of the Army of the *Philistines*, *1 Sam. 13. 5.* All which places give us to understand no more but this, That those Armies were hugely numerous, containing a stupendious multitude of people; but not that they did indeed equal the number of the sands that are upon the Sea-shore. The language therefore is hyperbolical, such as in other cases the Scripture useth; as *2 Chron. 28. 9.* where the Prophet *Oded* reproving the *Israelites* for their Wrath and Cruelty, saith, *They had slain their Brethren with a rage that reached up unto heaven;* that is, with an exceeding great rage. The like Hyperbolies those Builders of *Babel* used, when encouraging one another, they said, *Go to, let us build us a city, and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven,* *Gen. 11. 4.*

Now whereas such a Numerous Offspring is promised *Abraham* as a singular favour



vour, and as a reward of his Obedience, we may observe, That Children are a Blessing, and the more they are, the greater the Blessing is : This is frequently in Scripture either promised or mentioned as a Blessing. Three times we find it to have been promised to *Abraham* as a signal Blessing. *I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great*, said God to him, Gen. 12. 2. God brought him forth abroad, and he said, *Look now towards heaven, and tell the stars if thou be able to number them; and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be*, Gen. 15. 5. And again here in the Text, *I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand that is upon the sea-shore*. So to *Jacob* was the like Promise made, Gen. 28. 14. *Thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south*. So afterwards, when *Joseph* had sent for him, God encouraged him, saying, *Fear not to go down into Egypt, for I will there make of thee a great nation*, Gen. 46. 3. So *Jacob* blessing his Children when he now lay upon his Death-bed, made this one special part of *Joseph's* Blessing, Gen. 49. 22. *Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall*. And then he adds, v. 25. That the Almighty would bless him with the blessings of heaven above, and of the deep that

*lieth under, with the blessings of the breasts and of the womb. And thus also Moses before his death, blessing the Tribes of Israel, concludes his blessing of Joseph, with the Prediction of the great Increase of his Posterity; saying, His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns; with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth; and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh, Deut. 33. 17. So Job 5. 25. among divers other Blessings reckoned up, which God promiseth to bestow upon the truly humbled and penitent sinner, that by sanctified afflictions hath been reduced and brought to him, this is one, He shall know that his seed shall be great, and his offspring as the grass of the earth. Much to the same purpose we have in the Book of the Psalms. The Lord will bless them that fear him, both small and great; the Lord shall increase you more and more, you and your children; you are the blessed of the Lord which made heaven and earth, Psalm 115. 13, 14, 15. Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows in the hand of a mighty man, so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate, Psalm 127. 3, 4, 5. Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord, that walketh in his ways.*

*For*

For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands ; happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house ; thy children like olive-plants round about thy table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord. The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion, and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life ; yea, thou shalt see thy childrens children, and peace upon Israel, Psal. 128. Add hereunto, Isa. 48. 18, 19. O that thou hadst hearkned to my commandments ; then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea. Thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof. Now to apply what hath been spoken.

Use 1. If Children be a Blessing, then let such as have obtained Children, acknowledge it so to be. Thus did Jacob, Gen. 33. 5. *These are the children which God hath graciously given thy servant*, said he to his Brother Esau, demanding who they were that he had brought along with him. But this Blessing is so much the greater, and with so much the more thankfulness to God is it to be acknowledged, when they are good and gracious Children, and when they be dutiful and obedient Children. These bring Honour and Comfort to their Parents. Of these especially it is that Solomon saith, That they are a crown to their parents, Prov. 17. 6.

And

And that they make their Parents glad; Prov. 10. 1. and Prov. 15. 20. And again, Prov. 23. 24, 25. *The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice, and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him: Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice.* And much to the same purpose is that before in the 15th. and 16th. Verses of the same Chapter; *My son, if thy heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine; yea, my reins shall rejoice, when thy lips speak right things.* Wherefore no thankfulness can be sufficient for such a Blessing, wheresoever God hath bestowed it.

Use 2. If Children be a Blessing, then are they much to be blamed, who are so far from rendring unto God their due acknowledgments of this Blessing, that they seem to account it no Blessing at all, but rather look upon it as their Unhappinesse that they have Children. And there are divers sorts of these unthankful persons.

1. Such as would not be incumbered and troubled with the Care and Pains of bringing up Children. These should consider, *First*, Where they themselves had been if their Parents had been so nice and coy, and had consulted their own ease and quiet so much.

*Secondly*, They should consider that the Education of Children is a great and very con-



considerable service done to God, to his Church, and to the Commonwealth.

(1.) 'Tis a great and acceptable service to God. For God accounts your Children to be his Children; and therefore you educate them and bring them up for him in effect. When the *Israelites* had offered their Children in Sacrifice to Idols, God charging them with that horrid Wickedness, said, *Thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters whom thou hast born to me, and hast sacrificed them to idols to be devoured*, Ezek. 16. 20. They had born them to God, he had an interest in them; and therefore this was no small aggravation of their sin, that they had taken his Children and sacrificed them to Idols. So then, as their Children were God's Children, so they were obliged to have educated them for him, and to have consecrated them to him. This is your case, you have born Children to God, and therefore what pains and difficulties should you not be willing to undergo in bringing them up for him?

(2.) The educating of Children is a great service to the Church of God; you educate them for the Church, which were it not for the education of Children, after one Age, would fail. Were it not that there is still a Succession of Children to rise up in the room of their Parents, after some years Christ would have no Church upon



upon earth. Besides, you know not how eminently serviceable to the Church of God that poor Child may be, with whose Education you are unwilling to be troubled.

(3.) The Education of Children is likewise a great service to the Commonwealth, without which there would be neither any to govern others, nor any to be governed, and so indeed no Commonwealth at all.

2. Others are troubled that they have so many Children, because they have little to maintain them, and wherewithal to make provision for them. But this is no other than a prophane Distrust of God's Providence: As if he that gives Mouths could not also give Meat. The Goodness of God in making provision for numerous Families, where Parents can do very little for them, is most remarkable. Do you not often observe with admiration, how many Children have been well brought up by those Indigent and Necessitous Parents who seemed to have had scarce any thing for their own Support and Sustenance? And where was it ever observed, that if Parents were sober, provident, and industrious, any of theirs miscarried for Want, how many Children soever God had given them, and how little soever they had to maintain them? *He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry*, Psalm 147. 9. How much more will he sustain both you  
and

and yours, if ye depend on him, *O ye of little faith*; as our Saviour reasoneth, *Matth. 6. 30.*

3. Others having Lewd and Graceless Children, are apt to judge them happier than have none.

But (1.) How bad soever Children are for the present, they may become better. They have Immortal Souls, capable of Grace and Glory, and they may be such as belong to the Election of Grace, for ought that you know to the contrary.

(2.) Wicked Children may be kind, dutiful, helpful, and serviceable to their Parents, as even such sometimes are: And is it not a Mercy to their Parents that they have such Children as are tender of them, beneficial and useful to them?

(3.) Though the Blessings of God may be through man's sin corrupted, vitiated, and abused, yet they are, in themselves considered, Blessings still, and so to be acknowledged.

(4.) Even wicked men may be greatly serviceable to the Places where they live, and to their Generation. It may please God to make use of such a one to save a Town, to preserve a Kingdom from ruin: And shall the Parents of such a Child not acknowledge him a Blessing to them, who is so to many Thousands? The Heathen man said, It did not repent him that he was born,

born, because he was not born in vain, he had been useful and serviceable to his Country : Neither needs it repent Parents of having brought up and educated a Child that proves useful and eminently serviceable, though otherwise he be not such a one as they earnestly desire he may be, and wish that he were. And so much concerning that use.

Use 2. If Children be Blessings, let both Parents and Children take heed that they do not by their sins turn this Blessing into a Curse. Let Parents bring up their Children *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord* : Let them pray much for them, and give them good example ; and let them continue and persevere in so doing, altho they should not presently see the fruit of their endeavours for their good, which they desire and long after. And as for Children, let them labour to be more truly Blessings to their Parents, by their humble, tractable, dutiful, and obedient Carriage towards them, by their helpfulness and serviceableness to them, and by their constant endeavours to be every way a comfort to them. And all this they shall the better perform, if their first and chief care be to please God, and approve themselves to him, and then if they be careful to discharge their Duty towards their Parents upon God's account, for his sake, and in obedience to his

his Commands. But if Parents shall not only neglect their Children, neither praying for them, nor instructing them, but instead thereof give them evil Example, become Patterns to them of all manner of Wickedness, yea, and curse those whom they should pray for, as the manner of some ungodly and unnatural Parents is, What else can they expect at the hands of God, but that he should take them at their word, curse their Blessings, and make those their greatest Affliction, that should have been the greatest Comforts to them? And this may suffice to have been spoken concerning the first Branch of God's Promise to *Abraham*, That in multiplying he would multiply his seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand that is upon the sea-shore.

Now if you demand how this Promise was made good and fulfilled to *Abraham*:

I answer, The accomplishment and fulfilling of it was most strange and wonderful. There were but 70 Persons of them when *Jacob* went down into *Egypt*, *Gen.* 46. 27. and *Exod.* 1. 5. *Deut.* 10. 22. Or at the utmost but 75, as *St. Stephen* reckons them after another way of Computation, *Acts* 7. 14. Now the time of their continuance in *Egypt* was but 215 years; for <sup>it is</sup> evident from Chronology, that just half of the 430 years, mentioned *Exod.* 12. 40. and by the Apostle *Gal.* 3. 17. was spent



spent in *Canaan*, where the Patriarchs sojourned 215 years, after the Promise made to *Abraham* of the Land of *Canaan*; *Gen.* 12. 7. Now that in the space of 215 years, 70 or 75 persons should increase as they did, notwithstanding all the means which the *Egyptians* made use of to diminish and lessen them, is a thing that cannot but beget the highest admiration in the mind of any man that shall seriously consider it. For when they came out of *Egypt*, those 70 or 75 persons in the space of 215 years, were increased to the number of 600000 men that could bear Arms, besides Women and Children, and all under 20 years old, and Old Men that were unfit to bear Arms, *Exod.* 12. 37. For though Women be there only mentioned, besides the 600000, yet 'tis evident that Children and all others that were unfit for War, are also under them comprehended; for the 600000 are said to have been all such as went on foot, that is, who marched as armed men are wont to do. Besides, when they were numbered within a little more than one year after they came out of *Egypt*, *Numb.* 1. 45, 46. 'tis said, That the number of them from twenty years and upward, all that were able to go forth to war in *Israel*, was six hundred thousand, and three thousand, and five hundred and fifty. Now the Women and Children, and all under 20 years of age, and old men, are



are judged to have been as many, and half as many again as those who were numbred; insomuch as that it is rationally supposed, that the whole number of them could not be less than Fifteen hundred thousand. What a stupendious increase of 70 persons was this, in the space of 215 years! So then, in this most wonderful and never sufficiently admired Increase, we see the miraculous fulfilling of God's Promise made to *Abraham* touching the multiplying of his Seed.

I now go on to speak concerning the Second Branch of the Promise made to *Abraham*; That his seed should possess the gate of his enemies. The meaning of which Promise is plainly this, that they should subdue their Enemies, get the mastery of them, and rule over them. For,

1. In their Gates were the chief Fortifications of their Cities.

2. In the Gates were their Armories and Magazines, there they laid up their Artillery and Preparations for War. Both which are conceived to be intimated by several Scriptures, which I shall not need here to mention.

3. In the Gates were their Courts of Justice; there sate the Judges and Magistrates; there were Criminals and Offenders tried and censured; there were Causes and Controversies heard and determined:

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Thus

Thus *Hamor* and *Shechem* are said to have repaired to the Gate of the City, *Gen.* 34. 20. that they might there treat with the Inhabitants about their being circumcised, &c. So *Eliphaz*, describing the sad issues of wicked mens profligate and ungodly courses, and the miseries which thereby they bring upon their Posterity, saith, *Their children are far from safety, and they are crushed in the gate, neither is there any to deliver them, Job* 5. 4. *They are crushed in the gate*; that is, they are wronged and oppressed in Courts of Justice, where they ought to have been righted and relieved. So again, *Job* professing his Integrity, saith, *If I have lift up my hand against the fatherless when I saw my help in the gate, then let my arm fall from my shoulder-blade, &c. Job* 31. 21, 22. *When I saw my help in the gate*; that is, when I saw my Interest among those that sat in Judgment, to be such, as I could carry any thing, whether right or wrong, against all that should withstand and oppose me. So lastly, *Amos* 5. 12. the Prophet representing the wretched Iniquity and Injustice of those times, saith, *They afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right.*

The last branch of the promise made to *Abraham*, was, *In his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. In his seed*, that is, in *Christ*, who should descend from his seed,

seed, and who is expressly said to be the Son of Abraham; Matth. 1. 1. and the Son of David, according to the flesh; who was also to descend from Abraham. This is indeed the chief branch of the promise, That in Abraham's seed all the Nations of the Earth should be Blessed. In, by, and through Christ, the inestimable Blessings of the Pardon of Sins, Deliverance from Wrath to come, and Eternal Life, should be conferred upon true Believers of all Nations, whether Jews or Gentiles; hence it is that the Apostle, Gal. 3. 8, 9. saith, *That the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed: so then, they which be of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham.*

So much concerning the promise made to Abraham, and the several branches thereof. Now in the last place follows the ground or reason thereof; *Because thou hast obeyed my voice:* This ground of the promise was before mentioned, and more largely represented, to wit, in those words, *By my self have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not with-held thy son, thine only son from me, that in blessing, I will bless thee, and in multiplying, I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the*

gate of his enemies ; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed , because thou hast obeyed my voice ; which ground of the promise is here again repeated, though more briefly , *Because thou hast obeyed my voice.* Now 'tis thus mentioned before the promise, and repeated after the promise,

1. To shew how highly God valued *Abraham's* ready Obedience to so difficult a Command. The things which we take very well, and are much pleased with, we often speak of and mention them over and over, and we dwell upon them. So here, God condescending to *Abraham* by speaking to him, as men are wont to speak to others when they have done any thing that greatly pleaseth them, twice mentions and insists on his obedience as the ground of the promise made to him : Whence we may observe,

1. That the more difficult the commands of God are, and the more we must deny our selves in yielding obedience to them, the more highly pleasing and acceptable is our obedience to him. Wherefore 'tis not our interest to be picking out the easiest Duties and passing by the hardest ; to be chusing out those commands of God which we can most readily comply with, and in performance whereof we need not much deny our selves, or cross our

own



own inclinations; waving those commands that require us to do what our corrupt nature is most averse from. Alas! we consider not that the more we deny our selves to comply with the will of God, the more we please him, the greater acceptance our obedience finds with him, the greater will our reward be. We do therefore very much prejudice our selves and stand in our own light, when we wave any command of God, drawing back, and declining to yield obedience thereunto upon account of the difficulty thereof. Did we understand our own interest aright, and consult it, we would most willingly undertake the hardest services, and the most unacceptable part of our duty; we would most chearfully offer and address our selves to the performance of such duties above all others, and chuse to exercise our selves in them; and we would count it a special favour that God at any time calls us to any such severe Duties, in compliance wherewith we must offer some violence to our selves, and swim directly against the stream of our corrupt affections and sinful inclinations.

2. Another reason of God's repeating the ground of the promise made to *Abraham*, and of his mentioning it the second time, was that *Abraham* might take particular notice of it, and look upon those great Blessings which he had promised him,



as the reward of his obedience; for this would much sweeten the promise of those Blessings to him. What we know comes to us from the hand of God as a reward of our obedience, brings along with it double the comfort and satisfaction that otherwise it would have done; this infuseth an incredible sweetness into those good things which a man receives.

*Use.* This may teach us carefully to observe all God's gracious Providences towards us, and to labour to find out his intentions in them, to the end that if they were intended as rewards of our obedience, we may not lose the comfort of them. But you will say, How may a man know that any good thing which he receives, was intended as a reward of his Obedience? To this I shall briefly Answer,

1. Whatsoever comes in an unlawful way, whatsoever is acquired by unjustifiable means, can never be looked upon as a reward. Rewards come in God's way, that is, either by special and extraordinary Providences, or upon the use of lawful means: If a man grow rich by unjust ways of gain, by cheating or couzening, by rapine or violence, he cannot look upon his riches as coming to him from the hand of God in way of reward. So if a man get the honours of the world by flatteries, or any other base and sinful compliance with his  
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Superiors that hath power to advance him, he cannot look upon those honours so attain'd as rewards from the hand of God.

2. Though it be not an infallible argument, yet 'tis a shrewd presumption, that the good things which a man receives, were never given in by God in the way of reward, nor ever so intended, when they have a bad and pernicious influence upon a man; when they make him more proud and haughty, more injurious and oppressive to his inferiors, more wicked and profligate in his life and conversation, when he abuseth the good things which he hath received, to the dishonour of God, the injury of his Brethren, and the wronging of his own Soul. God is mostly wont to give a Sanctified use of those good things that come from him in way of rewards, and they who receive them, do, for the most part, make an holy use and improvement of them, and are not the worse but the better for them.

3. A man cannot upon any sufficient grounds look upon those good things which God hath conferred on him, as the rewards of his obedience, when he hath never been exercised in any of those good Duties and Services, unto the performance whereof such Blessings are promised. On the other hand, you may know and rest assured, that the good things which you receive at the

hands of God, are by him given unto you as the rewards of your obedience,

1. When God hath made you conscientious in the performance of the duties whereunto the promise of such good things are made.

2. When the good things which God bestows on men, come in such a season, as evidently manifesteth that they are given in to them as rewards of their obedience, as namely, when they come in immediately after they have been in a way more than ordinary exercised in those duties, which God has promised so to reward. It were here very easy to give many instances hereof from the Scriptures, as when *Solomon* had been exercised in the great service of Building and Dedicating the Temple, that God should then immediately appear unto him in such a gracious manner, as we read he did, *1 Kings* 9. 1, 2, 3, &c. as also he had before appeared to him upon the like occasion at *Gibeon*. So when *Jehoshaphat* and his People had humbled themselves by Fasting and Prayer, and sought help of God against their Enemies, which out of several Nations had combined themselves against them, God immediately by the Prophet *Jahaziel*, assures them of a glorious Victory to be obtained over them, which was accordingly effected the very next day, as we are informed in the sequel of that History,  
2 Chron.

2 Chron. 20. 1, 2, 3, &c. I shall add but one instance more, and it is that which is left upon record, *Acts 12.* where we read that when the Church of God had from *Peter's* first Imprisonment been seeking God for his release many days, it pleased God the very night before that *Herod* had designed to bring him forth and put him to death, he was in a miraculous manner set at liberty by an Angel from Heaven, and the tidings thereof was brought to the Church of God, in the house where they were met to seek God for that Mercy, by *Peter* himself, as we read, *v. 13.* his release being so strangely effected, and the notice thereof in such a manner and season brought to the Church, even when they were now seeking to God for that Mercy; How could it be in the least doubted of or questioned, but that his release was in answer to the Prayers of God's People, and given in as an eminent reward of their service.

3. A man may know that the good things he receives at the hands of God, are in way of reward of his service, by those impressions thereof which God sometimes by his Spirit makes upon the hearts of his people. Such impressions no doubt were made upon the hearts of *Solomon*, *Jehoshaphat*, and of those Christians assembled together, *Acts 12.* whereby they were abundantly satisfied

ed that what God had done for them, was done in reward of those services in which they had been then exercised. And such impressions, doubtless, were upon *David's* heart, when he said, *Psalms* 18. 20. *The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.* And again, *This I had because I kept thy precepts, Psalm* 119. 56. Unless they had by such immediate impressions from the Spirit of God been fully satisfied concerning it, How could they with so much confidence speak as they did?

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## The Seventh Sermon.

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Matt. IV. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.

*Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterwards an hungred, &c.*

**I**N the former part of this Chapter we have the History of our Saviour's Conflict with, and Victory over the Devil. The two first verses contain only what is antecedent, and preparatory to the Conflict. In the eight verses following we have the Conflict it self, consisting of three several Temptations of Satan, together with Christ's reply to them. And then in the eleventh verse we have the issue of this Conflict. I begin with what is antecedent and preparatory to the Conflict, in the first and second verses.

In which we have, 1. Christ's withdrawing of himself into the wilderness in order to his being tempted; *Then was Jesus*  
*led*

*led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil, v. 1.*

And 2d. His Fasting and Hunger there, *And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred, v. 2.*

In Christ's withdrawing himself into the Wilderness, there are several things considerable : Namely,

1. The Time when.
2. The Manner how.
3. The Place whither.
4. The End for which he withdrew himself.

Every one of these Particulars will afford us something that may be of use to us. I shall speak to them all briefly.

1. The Time when Jesus withdrew, is implied in the first word, *then* ; which relates to what is set down in the close of the former Chapter : There we read that Christ being Baptized of John in the River Jordan, as he went up straightway out of the water, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him : and lo, a voice from heaven saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* We must not think that the ends and purposes of Christ's Baptism, were the same with those of our Baptism. To us Baptism is *the Laver of Regeneration*, as the Apostle calls it, *Tit.* 3. 5. and by it our Sins are washed away,

*Acts*

*Acts 22. 16.* in some sense ; that is, Sacramentally, Baptism being a sign and seal of our Regeneration, and of the forgiveness of our Sins. But Christ being the Holy One of God, a *Lamb without blemish and without spot*, *1 Pet. 1. 19.* perfectly free both from the pollution, and from the guilt of all Sin, he needed neither Regeneration nor Pardon. Wherefore the reasons and intentions of Christ's Baptism were far different ; he by his Baptism, attended with the descent of the Spirit of God upon him like a Dove, and that Voice from Heaven, was solemnly Initiated, and, as it were, Inaugurated in the Office of Mediator. He had hitherto led a Life of more privacy and retirement from the world ; but now being to enter upon the publick execution of the Office of Mediator between God and Man, these solemnities were requisite at his entrance thereof. Now after these things, when he had been Baptized, when the Spirit of God had descended like a Dove, and lighted on him, when the Heavens being opened, a voice had been thence uttered, saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased* ; then it was that he was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil. Whence several things may be observed : The Devil's Tempting Christ at that time may be considered, either with relation to God's permitting him  
then

then to assault him, or the Devil's making choice of that time. That God was pleased then to permit Satan to assault him, was,

1. Because then Christ was endued with an extraordinary measure of the Holy Spirit, whereby he was fortified against Temptations, and enabled to repel and beat back all Satan's fiery darts. *St. Luke* having spoken of the Baptism of Christ, and of the descending of the Holy Spirit upon him in a bodily shape like a Dove, *chap. 3. 22.* adds concerning him, in the beginning of the Fourth Chapter, *That being full of the Holy Ghost, he returned from Jordan (where he had been Baptized) and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness; namely, to be there tempted of the devil, as St. Matthew relates, the end of his being led thither.*

And herein we may take notice of the singular Goodness of God to his People, that ordinarily he doth not let the Devil loose upon them, until he hath in some measure prepared and fitted them for the Conflict. Some good measure of strength he furnisheth them with to make resistance and maintain the Fight, before he suffers the Devil to fall upon them. And then besides, amid the Conflict he ever stands by them, and is in a readiness to interpose and come in to their succour when need requires; and as the  
Apostle



*Apostle speaks, he suffers them not to be tempted above what they are able, but with the temptation makes a way to escape, that they may be able to bear it, 1 Cor. 10. 13.*

I say ordinarily thus he deals with his children; though it be also true that sometimes he withdraws from them, and suffers them to be for the present worsted by Satan, when he sees it needful that for their humiliation, and to make them more watchful, more distrustful of themselves, and more careful to rely on God for strength, they should have experience of their own weakness. For such gracious ends as these, the best may sometime be foyled by the Enemy of Souls; but then in the issue they are gainers by their falls, and rise again more established and confirmed against the like Temptations, if the Tempter should again come on to assault them.

2. God was then pleased to permit the Devil to tempt our Saviour, when now upon his Baptism he was to enter upon the publick execution of his Mediatory Office, that he might thereby be the better fitted for the discharge of it. Temptation doth very much conduce to the preparing and qualifying men for publick service, especially for that service which promotes the salvation of souls.

For (1.) By being exercised in the School of Temptation, they come to be acquainted



ed with Satan's Wiles, Devices, and Artifices, which he makes use of to compass the ruin and destruction of souls.

(2.) By being exercised in the School of Temptation, they come to understand how the Combat between the tempted Soul and Satan is to be managed, how the Devil must be resisted, and how all his attempts against the soul may be defeated.

(3.) By being exercised in the School of Temptation themselves, they come to know how to lay open and discover to others the subtle and malicious practises of the Devil against mens souls; and to be able from their own experience to advise, direct, comfort, and encourage those that are tempted. He that hath not some experimental acquaintance with these matters, must needs be very unfit for that service, the design whereof is to save souls, and in order thereunto to recover men out of the snare of the Devil, who *are taken captive by him at his will*, as St. Paul speaks, *2 Tim. 2. 26.* And so much concerning God's permitting the Devil to tempt our Saviour at that time.

2. His being then tempted, may be considered with relation to Satan's making choice of that time rather than another. God's ends in permitting it were such as you have heard, most wise and gracious;  
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but Satan's ends in making choice of that season, were of another nature.

1. Now that Christ had been newly baptized, and the Spirit of God had descended on him like a Dove; now that he was full of the Holy Ghost, and had from Heaven received that honourable Testimony, *This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased*; the Devil was full of envy and rage against him, and therefore he took the next opportunity of venting his malice against him: He had no sooner withdrawn himself into the Wilderness where the Devil thought he had some advantage against him, but he falls upon him. These three Temptations indeed which are here mentioned, were not till after that he had been in the Wilderness, and there fasted during the space of forty days and forty nights; but 'tis evident that he was tempted of the Devil all that while, though the particular Temptations with which the Devil assaulted him, are not mentioned. This is manifest from the account which St. Luke hath given us hereof; *Luke 4. 1, 2.* who expressly affirms, that *he was led by the spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil.* Now whereas the Devil took the next opportunity of setting upon Christ, and of assaulting him with his Temptations, after that he had received that honourable Testimony from Heaven:

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We may observe, That as any man is more beloved of God, and hath been dignified with more eminent testimonies of his Favour, so is the Devil the more enraged, and the more maliciously bent against him. That wicked Spirit is full of pride, envy, and malice; and he being so, 'tis no wonder that he should hate those most, whom God most loves, and malign those most, whom God most favours.

This may teach the best men, and such as God favours most, to expect to be most maligned, and most furiously assaulted by the Devil. That proud and envious Creature cannot endure to see any man so much beloved of God, as to have been honoured with any special marks of his favour.

2. Then did the Devil assault Christ, because he was to make his entrance upon the Publick Execution of the Functions of his Mediatory Office. And hence we may observe,

That they who are employ'd in promoting the salvation of souls, shall be sure to meet with opposition from the Devil. The design of this Employment, is the advancement of the Glory of God, the setting up and enlargement of the Kingdom of Christ, and the pulling down of the Kingdom of Satan; upon all which accounts the Devil is concerned to hinder it as much as he is able. And none have reason to look for  
more

more violent and furious opposition from the Devil, than they who are engaged in this service most sincerely and zealously. Men of low and base designs, who in this Employment seek themselves and their own things more than the things of Christ, may have little disturbance from Satan. He sees they are not likely to do the Kingdom so much prejudice, as that he needs to bestir himself much to hinder them. But let any man serve Christ faithfully and zealously, let him drive on the great work of converting and saving souls heartily and vigorously, and the Devil will bear him a grudge. He will not be so much wanting to the support and upholding of his own Kingdom, as to let such a man alone. Further then God is pleased to chain him up and restrain him, he will not fail to give him all the trouble and molestation that his restless malice can possibly create unto him. Wherefore let none that have devoted themselves to the service of Christ and of his Church, in the work of the Gospel, and that set themselves to serve him faithfully therein, dream of leading a quiet, easy, and pleasurable life. As long as there is a Devil in Hell, and as long as that Devil hath so many wicked Instruments here on Earth, good men that really design the Glory of God, and the Salvation of Souls, may not think to be free from molestation and disturbance.

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This may suffice to have been spoken concerning the Time which Satan, God permitting him so to do, made choice of for assaulting our Saviour with his Temptations. The next thing to be spoken of, is the Manner how Christ withdrew himself into the Wilderness to be tempted of the Devil; the Text saith, *he was led by the spirit*; that is, by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, which had descended and lighted on him in the shape of a Dove; by the motion and instinct of this Spirit he was led into the Wilderness to be tempted.

And here we may observe, 1. That Christ did not unwarrantably expose himself to the Temptations of the Devil; what he did in withdrawing himself into the Wilderness, was in compliance with the motion and leading of the Holy Spirit. We may not therefore think that the Example of Christ will be a sufficient warrant to us for running presumptuously upon Temptations, and for our even tempting the Tempter himself to set upon us. Though Christ withdrew himself into the Wilderness to be tempted of the Devil, yet 'tis our duty to shun and avoid all manner of Temptations as much as we can. What Christ did herein was of an extraordinary nature, and never intended for a President to be imitated by us. He was perfectly free from sin, and strong to resist Temptations;  
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we are sinful, frail, and weak Creatures : He had the motion and leading of the Holy Spirit for his warrant ; we can never plead the motion of the same Spirit when we venture upon Temptations. We may assure our selves the Spirit of God never moves us to do any thing that is contrary to the Rule, which it should do if it did move us and draw us on to offer our selves to Temptations.

2. Whereas Christ was led by the Spirit into the Wilderness to be tempted of the Devil, we may further observe, That our Temptations are ordered by God. He permits them, and disposeth of all the Circumstances of them. 'Tis by his order and permission that Satan assaults us at such a time, and in such a place ; and that he sets upon us with such particular Temptations rather than with other. He sees what Temptations will do us most good , and when they will most conduce to our spiritual advantage , and accordingly permits Satan to tempt us. The sound belief and serious consideration hereof would much quiet our minds, and free us from a great part of that trouble which the Temptations of the Devil through our weakness create to us.

We often think that we could submit to be assaulted with any kind of Temptation, rather than that which God is pleased to

exercise us with. But God seeth that Temptation to be fittest for us, and of all other best suited to the condition and exigencies of our souls.

Again, sometimes the horrible nature of the Temptation so amazeth and affrights us, that we think our selves the most wretched and miserable Creatures in the world ; no sorrow, no affliction is like unto ours. But if we did here also believe and consider, that the very kind of Temptation is ordered by God, and is such as his Infinite Wisdom judgeth meetest for us , and as shall do us most good in the end, we should be much less discomposed and disquieted , amazed and distracted , than we are.

There is yet one thing more , observable from the Manner of Christ's withdrawing himself into the Wilderness ; 'tis said, *He was led by the spirit into the wilderness.* He was not violently driven or hurried into the Wilderness, that's more suitable to the Devil ; he forcibly impels and hurries us on ; but the Holy Spirit gently leads, sweetly attracts and draws us on to do what is acceptable to God. This leading of the Spirit the Apostle speaks of, *Rom. 8. 14. As many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the children of God.* And again, *Gal. 5. 18. If ye be led by the spirit, ye are not under the law.*

This

This may afford us some help for distinguishing between the Instigations of the Devil, and the Motions of the Spirit of God. When you are impetuously transported and hurried on, you may justly suspect the Devil to have had some influence upon you. These furious transports and violent hurries are so ordinary and familiar with some, that scarce one day passeth without them. And they are so much the more dangerous and the more incurable, when men are so far from suspecting Satan in them, and the corruption of their unquiet and distempered spirits giving Satan an advantage, that they discern no evil in them, but upon all occasions plead for them, and justify themselves in them. This argues a strange degree of self-love, blindness of mind, and hardness of heart as to this particular. Besides, it is much to be feared that Satan hath gotten so much within the spirits of such persons, that he will not easily be dispossessed. For how should they be freed from his violent workings in them, who will neither own nor see any evil in their excesses, nor think themselves in the least concerned to be humbled for them, and strive against them?

So much concerning the Manner how Christ withdrew himself: Now follows the Place whither he withdrew; *He was led by the spirit into the wilderness.* And why

into the Wilderness? Why should that be thought the fittest place? Might not the Devil have assaulted him any where else?

*Ans.* 1. In the Wilderness the Devil would have the greatest advantage against him, and consequently the greatest encouragement to assault him. In the Wilderness there would be none to lend Christ any assistance in this Combat, so as the Devil might there hope to prevail, if ever.

2. For Christ to have overcome the Devil where he had so much advantage, would both render Christ's Victory over him so much the more glorious, and the Devil's defeat so much the more shameful and confounding. Now though Christ, knowing his own strength, might well give Satan this advantage; yet we knowing our own weakness, may not: Solitariness is a great advantage to the Devil; and therefore they do very ill who being melancholick, and subject to many Temptations, affect to be alone. *Two are better than one, but wo be to him that is alone, saith Solomon, Eccles. 4. 9, 10.* However the *Wise-man* there intended it, 'tis most true, and fitly applicable in the present case. A man that is alone, hath none to help him out when a Temptation puzzles him, and the Tempter is too hard for him; but a prudent Friend at hand might offer that which might foil the Tempter, and relieve the tempted.

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Add hereunto, That the Devil is not so forward and busy with his Temptations, when men are in company of knowing and experienced Christians, who are able to detect and lay open his cunning devices and mischievous stratagems against the soul, as when they are alone. The presence of such is some discouragement to him, as solitarness is his encouragement. In short, the Devil will still have too many advantages against us, when we have done all that we can to cut off advantages from him. Let us not therefore be so regardless of our own safety, as to put advantages into his hands.

Again, Whereas the Devil finds out Christ in the Wilderness, whither he had withdrawn himself, we may observe, that there is no place free from the temptations of the Devil. Let a man withdraw himself whither he will, the Devil will still follow him, and have access unto him. Until we are withdrawn from this world, and have gotten to Heaven, we shall never be secured against his assaults. When we come to Heaven indeed we shall be above his reach; that's the only place from which he is excluded. The consideration hereof should make us long to be in Heaven, where Satan shall never any more molest us to eternity; and while we are here, seeing no place in this inferior world is free from him, we should stand upon our watch in all places,



ces, and ever keep our selves in a ready posture to encounter him whensoever or wheresoever he shall make an assault upon us.

There is yet one thing more considerable in Christ's being tempted in the Wilderness: There is no question to be made but that Christ while he was in the Wilderness spent the time in Meditation and Prayer, and in Converse with God, further than the temptations of the Devil interrupted him. And yet amid his Converse with God in those holy exercises, the Devil is bold to interpose, and to attempt to give him all the trouble that he can.

Whence we may observe, That Satan is ready to assault us, and by his temptations to occasion disturbance to us, amid our most sacred Employments, and holiest Duties. He is ever at hand to molest and disturb us when we are hearing the Word, when we are offering up our Prayers and Praises to God, when we are giving our attendance on him at his Table, when we are sequestering our selves for Meditation and Self-examination; when we are searching our hearts, and enquiring into our spiritual estate. The holiness of no duty or employment frights him away from us; yea rather, the better we are employed and taken up, the more maliciously and industriously will he endeavour to disturb us.

Let

Let us not therefore at any time think, that for the present we are safe enough from Satan, because we are so well employ'd. Let us be ever watchful against him; but let's then be most watchful, when we are exercised in those things which more immediately relate to the Glory of God, and the Benefit of our Souls. For in these things above all other, the Devil will attempt to give us whatever molestation and disturbance he is able.

And so I should have done with the Place whither Christ withdrew himself, but that it may not be amiss before I pass on, to touch at what *St. Mark, chap. 1. 13.* takes notice of, though *St. Matthew* passeth it by in silence; to wit, That Christ was in the Wilderness with the Wild Beasts: This, by the way, gives us to understand what kind of Wilderness it was whereto Christ was led by the Spirit; namely, a perfect Wilderness, utterly void of any Inhabitants; and not a Wilderness improperly so called, because thinly inhabited. But how could Christ safely be with the Wild Beasts? How was it that they did not offer violence to him, and prey upon him?

*Ans.* 1. How fierce and ravenous forever any of them might be in their own natures, it was most easy for Christ by his Divine Power to stop their mouths, rebuke their hungry and ravenous appetite, and  
for

for the present so to tame and becalm their fierce dispositions, as that he might safely pass up and down among them, and meet them at every turn.

2. We know that before man sinned, there was such an awe of him upon the rest of the Creatures, that none of them, not the fiercest among them all, not the strongest, the boldest, and most courageous among them all, durst rise up against him, or attempt to do him any hurt. Besides, till man had by his sin made God his Enemy, all the Creatures were friendly to him. So their now rising up against man, they do but revenge the quarrel of their Creator, against whom he hath rebelled. Wherefore seeing Christ was perfectly free from sin, why may it not be that the Creatures had the same impressions of awe upon them in reference to him, which they had while man continued in the state of Innocency? As for us, we may thank our selves for what injuries we receive from the Creatures. By our Rebellions against God we have armed them against us. As often therefore as we suffer from the irrational Creatures, it behoves us to reflect and consider wherein we have provoked God to let loose the Creatures upon us. If we could carry our selves more dutifully, obediently, and friendly towards God, we should then meet with fewer molestations  
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and injuries from his Creatures ; he that is at Peace with God, and is careful to please him, *shall be in league with the stones of the field, and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with him, Job 5. 23.*

So at length from the place whither Christ was led by the Spirit, I come to speak of the end for which he was led thither ; *he was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.* Here we may consider Two things :

1. The holy Spirit's leading Christ into the Wilderness to be Tempted.

2. Christ's giving himself up to be led ; or his voluntary compliance with the leading of the Spirit.

From the former of these, the holy Spirit's leading Christ into the *wilderness to be tempted of the devil,*

We may observe, That God may and doth sometimes so dispose of his Children, as that they may be assaulted and tempted of Satan. He doth not stir up or thrust forward Satan to Tempt them, but he brings them into those circumstances in which Satan will be sure to set upon them, if God refrains him not, but lets him alone, and leaves him to act as his wicked and malicious Nature inclines him. The last Petition in the Lord's Prayer, wherein we beg that God would *not lead us into Temptation,* clearly implies, That God may  
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and sometimes doth, in this sense, lead his People into Temptation. But though God may sometimes do it, yet our Saviour hath taught us to Pray against it, in regard of our weakness and sinful inclinations to yield to Temptations, when we are assaulted with them.

And so much concerning the holy Spirit's leading Christ into the Wilderness to be Tempted.

2. Christ's willingness to be led by the Spirit, or his voluntary compliance with the leading of the holy Spirit, is the other thing to be spoken to. Now this his compliance with the leading of the Spirit, I shall consider,

1. More Generally.

2. More particularly with relation to the present case, his being led to be Tempted of the Devil.

For the former of these, our Saviour was led by the Spirit; that is, he freely gave himself up to be led by the Spirit; for so much is implied when 'tis said, *That he was led by the Spirit*: We may not apprehend that he was led against his will, or involuntarily carried into the Wilderness, whether he would or no; he knew that it was the Holy Spirit that moved and inclined him, and therefore he most freely and readily went whither the Holy Spirit moved him to go; so that he was not merely

Passive,



Passive, but Active, yea most readily and freely Active therein. And what he did, that should we do. We also should most readily and freely comply with every motion of the Holy Spirit; we should give up our selves to be led by him; whensoever we perceive our selves to be moved by the Holy Spirit to do any thing, we should immediately, readily, chearfully, apply our selves to the doing of it. But here two things must be looked to, and carefully heeded, that we be sure that we are indeed moved by the Holy Spirit to do any thing, and that we be not mistaken therein; and then being upon good grounds satisfied therein, that we suffer not any thing to take us off, or divert us from doing what by the Holy Spirit we are moved to do.

1. We must be very careful that we be not mistaken, that we think not those motions to be from the Spirit of God that are not. And herein our care and heedfulness must be the greater, because 'tis very easy to be deceived, both from the deceitfulness of our own hearts, and from Satan.

1. Our own Hearts are deceitful; and they may perswade us that those inward motions are from the Spirit of God, that are purely the motions of our own Spirits, or, it may be, the motions and workings of our Corruption.

2. Satan

2. Satan can transform himself into an Angel of Light, as the Apostle speaks, 2 Cor. 11. 14. he can so impose upon us and delude us, as that we shall think his suggestions and motions to be from the Spirit of God. How many in our times, as well as in former Ages of the Church, have been thus deluded by him! the teaching of the Holy Spirit is pretended to by those who hold and teach the most dangerous and destructive Errors and Heresies; and the leading and motions of the Spirit have been also pretended to by those who have given and addicted themselves to the most vicious and abominable practises.

But you will say, How then may we be able to distinguish between those motions that are from the Spirit of God, and those that are not?

A. 1. The leadings and motions of the Holy Spirit are not contrary to the Word, and Revealed Will of God: The Word and the Spirit go together; *My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put into thy mouth; shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seeds seed, Isai. 59. 21.* 'Tis no other then a seducing and lying Spirit that would lead us into any way which is not agreeable to the Word. To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not accord-

*according to this word, it is because there is no light in them, Isa. 8. 20.*

2. The Spirit of God ordinarily moves no man to act beyond the line of his place and calling. I say ordinarily, to obviate an Objection that may be made from what Phineas did, *Numb. 25.* whose call to that heroical action was extraordinary; concerning which I have spoken more largely in my Discourse on that portion of Scripture. It moves not a private man to attempt that which belongs to the Magistrate. A private Person may be apt to think he acts from a principle of true zeal for God's Glory, and that he is influenc'd by the Spirit of God, when he undertakes to punish Sin, and to reform abuses in Church and State; whereas these things belonging to publick Persons, and to them only, may not be taken in hand by any private Man without Sin, unto which the Spirit of God cannot, without Blasphemy, be said to move any Man.

3. The Spirit of God never moves any to what is good in it self unseasonably, and when some other duty should be attended on; puts no man upon Reading or Discouraging of good things, when he should be Hearing the Word or Praying. It puts him not upon the performance of Duties of Piety, with the neglect of those works of Mercy which the present necessities of his

Brother rather call for ; God in such cases *will have mercy, and not sacrifice*, Hof. 6. 6. He will have the duties of Piety for the present to give way to works of Charity ; and therefore we may be sure that the Spirit of God doth not move us to set upon one duty, when God would have us rather to be exercised in another.

4. The Spirit of God doth not offer an impetuous force or violence to us ; he doth not hurry us on, and drive us headlong to do or undertake any thing, as the Devil, our own headstrong passions, and unruly lusts, are wont to do. 'Tis true, the motions of the Holy Spirit are many times most Powerful, and yet withal they are calm, gentle, and sweet ; we are by them most effectually, and yet most freely and quietly drawn on to do our duty, not boisterously and forcibly pull'd on.

But you will say, the Apostle St. Paul speaks of his being *pressed in the spirit*, Acts 18. 5. and 'tis by all acknowledged that there are inward impulses of the Spirit.

A. That whereas St. Paul saith concerning himself, that he was *pressed in the spirit* ; in those words Two things may be implied :

1. That he was so convinced of his duty and obligation to testify unto the Jews, *That Jesus was the Christ*, that he could not satisfy himself to hold his peace.

2. That



2. That he was also inwardly moved to speak, so as he could not but speak; he could not forbear to speak, having those convictions and those motions of the Spirit to speak, accompanying them. But neither his convictions concerning his duty, nor those inward motions of the Holy Spirit, nor both of them together, amounted to any violent and forcible impressions upon his Spirit, or to any impetuous thrusting him on to Preach Christ to the *Jews*. His meaning only is, That being so convinced, and so moved, he could not wave or neglect the Duty. Then as for Divine Impulses, they are much of the same nature; they are when a man feels himself so convinced of his duty, and so inwardly moved to the performance of it, that he hath no satisfaction or rest in his own Spirit, untill he hath done the thing; though all this while he is not hurried on against his will, but without the least infringement of, or prejudice to his liberty, freely engaged therein.

But whatever impulses there may be, if they be not regular and agreeable to the Word, they are not Divine, but Human or Diabolical, and accordingly they must be opposed and resisted. When a man feels himself inwardly urged and impelled to do any thing which God hath forbidden, he may certainly know and conclude that such



impulses are not from God ; for 'tis impossible that he should put a man upon doing that, which he himself hath made unlawful to be done. This were to make him the author of sin, and consequently to disable him to punish it ; For how can he justly inflict punishment for that which he himself is the cause of ? 'Tis therefore a most dangerous thing for any man to heed and follow inward impulses, before he hath fully examined whether the things which those impulses would engage him in, be such as are agreeable to the Revealed Will of God. The danger hereof lies in Two things.

1. He that shall give himself up to follow impulses blindfold, may, so doing, give himself up to the leading and conduct of the Devil for ought that he knows, and so be carried on to the perpetration and commission of the most horrid wickedness in the world.

2. When he hath done it, he involves God in the guilt thereof together with himself ; for taking those impulses to be Divine, he makes God to have engaged him in what he hath done.

And so much touching the first thing, that we endeavour to be very sure, and to be fully satisfied, that those motions which we comply with and follow, be from the Spirit of God.

2. Being

2. Being satisfied concerning it, our next care must be, that we suffer nothing to take us off from pursuing those motions. Herein our weakness and frailty often appears. At first we seem to comply fully with the good motions of the Holy Spirit, and pursue them earnestly; but anon our zeal and forwardness is cold; *we begin in the spirit but end in the flesh*, as the Apostle speaks, *Gal. 3. 3*. We follow the motions of the Spirit, and give our selves up to his conduct for the present, but we do *not follow on*, as the Prophet's phrase is, *Hos. 6. 3*. After a while we consult with flesh and blood, we listen to carnal Wisdom, and yield to the solicitations of our corrupt Affections, or we are weary of well doing, and give way to our slothful nature, and so at length the good motions of the Holy Spirit are smothered and stifled in us. O how often do we in this manner, *grieve and quench the Spirit*, and, as much as in us lies, render all his good motions insignificant and fruitless to us!

And thus I have done with the more general consideration of Christ's ready compliance with the leading of the Holy Spirit.

2. I now come to consider it with its particular relation to his being tempted of the Devil. And herein we may see just matter of admiring the unspeakable condescension of Christ, the Eternal Son of

God, who would vouchsafe to stoop so low, and so far to humble himself, as to be willing to be tempted of Satan. If the most virtuous and chaste Prince or Emperor in the world, should be solicited and tempted to Lewdness by the basest, the most dirty and abominable Strumpet in all his dominions, all this were nothing in comparison of Christ's being tempted of the Devil. And yet to this degree of humiliation and abasement was Christ willing to stoop and bow down himself for our sake. A dispensation so strange, as that 'tis hard to say which of the two is therein more to be admired, his Condescension, or his Love; both which are matchless and incomparable.

But here a double Question may be moved, Why Christ would be tempted of the Devil? And how he could be tempted of him? To the former of these, Why Christ would be tempted of the Devil, something hath by the way been said already. To say nothing of his Father's good pleasure that he should be tempted, and the Holy Spirit's leading him into the Wilderness to be tempted, with both which he readily complied;

I. He was willing to be tempted of the Devil, to let us know what we all must look for, namely, that the Members herein, be conformable to the Head. If Christ was assaulted

assaulted by the Devil, who amongst us all may expect to be free from his Temptations?

2. That he might by his own Example teach us how we are to withstand the Devil, and resist his Temptations.

3. That he might from his own experimental acquaintance with the bitterness of Temptation, be the more tenderly and compassionately affected towards those that are tempted. This account the Apostle gives of his being tempted, *Heb. 2. 17, 18.* *In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high-priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people; for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.*

4. That by his Victory over Satan, he might encourage us to withstand him, he being our head, and both tempted and victorious in our nature. Wherefore his Victory over Satan is unto us as it were a Pawn and Earnest of our Victory, if we be not wanting to our selves, and do not through our sloth and cowardise betray our selves into the hands of our Spiritual Enemy. These are some of the reasons why Christ would vouchsafe to be tempted; which was the first question.

2. How could Christ be tempted? How could he who was most holy, and perfectly free from sin, and who was himself the Eternal Son, *God over all, God blessed for ever*, be subject to Temptation? Besides, St. James saith expressly, *That God cannot be tempted with evil*, James 1. 13.

*Ans.* Christ could not so be tempted of the Devil, as to be effectually drawn into sin, or to receive any sinful impressions from temptation. Our Saviour being truly God, it was utterly impossible that he should be so tempted. We, in regard of our weakness, in regard of the corruption of our hearts, and our natural propensions to what is evil, soon warp and decline, every temptation turns us aside; but God being perfectly and immutably holy, cannot be influenced or wrought upon by temptations. There was nothing in Christ to incline or dispose him to yield to or comply with temptations; and therefore all Satan's fiery darts, with how much rage and violence soever they were cast at Christ, were instantly repelled and beaten back again.

By what hath been spoken it appears how far Christ might be tempted.

1. He could not at all have been tempted, but by his own free condescension and permission. As soon as ever the Devil attempted to assault him, he might have confounded



founded him and turned him into nothing; or he might have so rebuked him, as that he should have had no power, as much as to have made any attempt to assault him.

2. But however, with Christ's permission, he might tempt him both outwardly and inwardly; notwithstanding the perfect Holiness and Purity of his nature.

1. Externally; Either by an audible voice and words, or by proposing to him, and laying before him objects that might have drawn any of us into sin.

2. He might also tempt him internally, by offering to his mind, and representing to his thoughts such things as would have drawn a frail corrupt man, such as we are, into sin. Neither had any of these ways of tempting him been any stain or prejudice to the absolute Purity and Holiness of his Nature; so long as we suppose, as still we must, that there was not the least degree of consent or compliance on his part, but a perfect hatred and abhorrence of whatever evil he was tempted to. 'Tis not our being tempted, that defiles us, but our consent to, or compliance with temptations, and those corrupt and sinful impressions which our frail nature receives from them.



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## The Eighth Sermon.

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M A T T H. IV. 2.

*And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterwards an hungred.*

SO having at length done with the first Verse, I go on to the second ; of which I shall speak much more briefly. *And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterwards an hungred.* A miraculous Fast this was ; for never was it known that any man fasted so long by the power of nature. All that while, by the Divine Power of Christ was the Human Nature upheld and sustained without food ; yea, without any sense of the need of food. All that while he felt no appetite to food, as is clearly implied, when 'tis added, *And afterwards he was an hungred* : Before, therefore, he was not. Now though the Divine Power of Christ miraculously sustained his Human Nature during the space of forty days, yet afterwards there was no such miraculous support ; and therefore being  
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left to the ordinary course of Nature, he had a sense of the want of food, and was an hungred as usually men are. Here several Questions may be moved concerning Christ's fasting.

*Quest.* 1. Why did Christ fast? What were the ends of his so long Abstinence?

*Ans.* The principal ends of this his miraculous fasting seem to have been these that follow.

1. That he might gain the more Authority to his Doctrine, and confirm the truth of what he taught. For having sustained himself so long without food in the Wilderness, there was no ground of suspicion that he who wrought this Miracle on himself was an Impostor, and one that delivered those things to his hearers, that were false, and deserved not their belief. He who came out of the Wilderness with this Testimony from Heaven to the Truth of his Doctrine, how could he be thought not to have received his Doctrine from Heaven?

2. Another end of his miraculous fasting seems to have been, that he might by this Miracle done by his own Power, as all the rest of his Miracles were, give proof and evidence of his Deity. This beyond all exception clearly proves him to be God; for who else but God could of and from himself do that which transcends the Power of all created Beings? 'Tis true, the Prophets  
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and Holy Men of God under the Old Testament wrought Miracles, but they all professedly wrought them not by their own Power, but by the Power of God.

3. His so long Abstinence seems to have been also, that he might for that time with more freedom of spirit give himself to holy Meditation and Prayer.

*Quest.* 2. Another Question may be, Why he fasted forty days precisely, neither more nor less?

Hereunto some answer, That he fasted forty days, that he might not seem to be inferior either to *Moses* or *Elias*, who had fasted so long. But then why had he not fasted longer, that he might thereby have demonstrated himself to be greater than either of them. Others assign other reasons why he fasted so long and no longer :

But perhaps, leaving such uncertain Conjectures, the best and safest Answer would be, to resolve it into Christ's good pleasure: He fasted forty days, and forty nights, neither more nor less, because so it seemed good to him. His good pleasure is reason sufficient to satisfy us, where the Scripture is silent as to any other reason.

*Quest.* 3. Another Question may be, Whether Christ's fasting forty days be to be imitated by us?

*Answ.* Whatever some may affirm concerning it, 'tis apparent that Christ never  
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intended therein to make himself a Pattern for our imitation.

For 1. His fasting being miraculous, he is no more to be imitated therein, than in any other of the Miracles which he wrought. They may as well affirm, That he intended we should imitate him in curing all manner of diseases, and in raising the dead.

2. We have not one word in Scripture whereby he ever recommended his own Example therein to us for our imitation; neither have we any instance in Scripture, of any such Fast ever observed by the Primitive Christians in imitation of Christ.

3. That fasting which is in Scripture recommended to us, and in some cases called for and enjoined, is of a far different nature; and that both as to the Fast it self, and as to the Ends of it.

1. As to the Fast it self; Christ's fasting was a total Cessation from eating, for the space of forty days and forty nights: But the Fasts observed by the People of God in Scripture, were ordinarily till the Even only, and then they took food and refreshed themselves.

2. The Ends of the Fasts observed by the People of God, were the humbling of themselves for sin, the averting or removing of the heavy Judgments of God, either inflicted on them, or due to them for their sins, the seeking Pardon of Sin, Peace

with

with God, and Reconciliation to him, whose displeasure they had by their sins incurred: These and the like were the Ends which the People of God proposed to themselves in their Fastings; none of which could be intended by our Saviour in his Fasting, who being free from all sin, was not concerned to be humbled for it, or to seek the pardon thereof. Add hereunto, That the Fasts which God's People observe, are for the afflicting of their Souls, and for the beating down the Body, and the bringing it into subjection; for which intents and purposes Christ needed not to fast; and besides, his fasting was such as could not promote either the one or the other; for he being sustained by the Power of his Godhead, felt neither hunger nor weakness during the space of forty days, so that his fasting was no pain nor affliction to him, either with relation to soul or body.

4. Whereas under the Old Testament *Moses* and *Elias* fasted forty days, we never find that the *Jews* counted themselves obliged to imitate the one or the other. Where do we meet with any footsteps of any such Usage or Practice among them in all the Old Testament? And if their fasting forty days were no pattern for the *Jews* imitation, why should Christ be thought to have set us a Pattern therein; especially considering that he never as much as intimated  
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so much by any one word that fell from his mouth?

But here those of the Church of *Rome* cry out against us, That we are enemies to fasting. A most false and injurious Charge. We do not only allow, but earnestly call for, press and practice the Duty upon all just occasions; but we most deservedly and justly renounce and disclaim all those Corruptions and Superstitions which those of that Apostatical Church have mingled with it, and by which they have prophan'd so holy and sacred a Duty. The things which we dislike and reject in their Quadragesimal Fast, are principally these:

1. That they therein pretend to imitate Christ in that which is inimitable, and which he never enjoined us to imitate him in.

2. That under the name and pretence of fasting, they do nothing less than fast; for they only abstain from Flesh and Milk-meats; and perhaps some few other things, which are of that nature as they cannot easily tempt any man to excess; but they allow the free eating of all other things whatsoever; which is directly contrary to what our Saviour did, and to what the People of God did, who in their Fasts abstained from all manner of food.

3. That

3. That they allow the eating of the most exquisite Dainties in any other kind, and the drinking of the most rich and generous Wines that can be gotten: In a word, that they allow the free eating and drinking of those things that pamper the Body, gratify the Flesh, heighten and inflame Lust, much more than the eating of Flesh, Milk, and such things as are made of it, could ever do. That thus, while they would seem to fast in imitation of Christ, making a Mock-Fast instead of a true Religious Fast, they prophane the Ordinance of God, and render fasting ridiculous and contemptible.

4. That they place Religion in this kind of fasting, and make it a thing highly acceptable to God, that they abstain only from Flesh, Milk, and Milk-meats, &c. though they glut themselves with all other Delicates.

5. That they go yet further than all this, making their fasting meritorious in the sight of God, and making it satisfactory to the Justice of God for their sins.

6. That they impose their Fast upon men as absolutely necessary, and require the observation thereof as matter of duty towards God, which no man can without sin omit, further than the Church of *Rome* shall think fit to dispense with him. That they pronounce an *Anathema*, a dreadful Curse



against all those who shall neglect to observe this Fast, as 'tis by them enjoined and required. These are the things which we upon good grounds condemn in their *Quadragesimal* Fast. But we are so far from disliking a true Religious Fast, that we judge it a great duty, when the Publick Calamities and Distresses of Church and State, or the Concernments of Families and particular Persons call for it, and in such Seasons as the Government in Church and State shall appoint. But then,

1. We are far from thinking that we can merit any thing at the hands of God, or make satisfaction to the Justice of God for our sins by fasting, though we could fast not only forty days, but as many years.

2. Neither do we think that fasting it self, or our mere abstinence from meat, in it self considered, is a thing acceptable to God. The Apostle hath informed us, *That the kingdom of God consisteth not in meat and drink, but in righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, Rom. 14. 17.* And that *meat commendeth us not to God; for neither if we eat, are we the better; neither if we eat not, are we the worse, 1 Cor. 8. 8.* Wherefore to place Religion in fasting it self, as it signifies a pure abstinence from bodily food, is a vain and superstitious thing. Fasting is acceptable to God with reference to the end thereof, and no otherwise; namely,



ly, so far as it is an help and furtherance to devotion, and to the spiritual duties, to the designs and ends of a Religious Fast ; as it renders us more free for the service of God ; as it promotes our humiliation for sin ; as it conduceth to the fervency of our Prayers ; as it furthers the subduing and taming of the flesh, the beating down of the body, and the bringing of it into subjection to the spirit. If the most severe and rigorous fasting be separated from these spiritual ends and uses, it signifies nothing, and is of no account at all with God : And how little the Popish Mock-fast conduceth to these ends, 'tis not difficult for any man to judge.

The consideration of what hath been said, may caution all such as upon occasion addict themselves to fasting, to be very careful that they rest not in a bare abstinence from food, as if that alone were pleasing unto God ; but that they improve their abstinence to the ends before-mentioned ; spending the time of their particular abstinence in Prayer, in searching into their hearts, in humbling themselves for sin, in reading the Scriptures and other good Books, in holy Meditation, in getting their hearts at a greater distance from their special sins, and taking up firmer resolutions against them. In these things lies the very spirit and life of fasting ; and without these things, though a man should even famish himself with

abstinence, though he should bring his body to a Skeleton with fasting, yet when he had done all this, he would find no more acceptance with God than those hypocritical Jews did with whom God expostulates, *Isa. 58. 5. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? A day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head like a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord?* That is, Do you think that I am so well-pleased and delighted with the bare outward formalities of a Fast? With your abstinence from meat, spreading sackcloth and ashes under you, and looking sadly for a day, though there be neither earnest Prayer, nor sound Humiliation, nor sincere Reformation, nor any thing else belonging to a true Fast, besides the empty shew and outside thereof?

So from what is antecedent and preparatory to the Conflict between Christ and Satan, I come to the Conflict it self, and therein to the first part of the Conflict, in the third and fourth Verses. *And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.* In which Words we have,

1. Satan's Temptation.

2. The Reply of Christ thereunto.

In the Temptation there are divers things considerable.

1. The occasion and season of it ; which as the Circumstances in the Text shew , was after that he had fasted forty days and forty nights , and was now an hungred. So then, we may consider Satan's temptation , either with relation unto Christ's fasting, or his hungering. If we consider it with relation to his having fasted forty days and forty nights, after which Satan assaults him with the forest temptations, we may observe , That Satan is wont to assault God's people with his temptations immediately after the most sacred duties.

As for example ; after the Sacrament, after a Sabbath, after a day spent in fasting and humiliation, and the like. And the reasons of the Devil's making choice of such times, are,

1. Because Christians are oft times then most careless and secure , less circumspect and watchful over themselves. And this upon a double account ;

(1.) Having been so well exercised and taken up, they are apt to think themselves for one while sufficiently fenced and fortified against the incursions and assaults of Satan.

(2.) After that they have for some time given their close attendance on God in such severe duties and employments, they are apt to think they may now allow themselves some liberty and divertisement more than ordinary. Now Satan discerning his advantage against them in both those respects, is not wanting to make the best improvement of it.

2. Satan is wont to give the forest assaults on Christians, after they have been exercised in the most sacred and serious employments, to the end he may bring those duties and holy exercises out of request with them, and cast reproach upon them, and on the same account upon Religion it self. For if he can notably foil them, or entice them into some great sin immediately after a Sacrament, or a Sabbath, or a day spent in humiliation, or after that they have at any time spent more hours than ordinarily they are wont to do, in secret Prayer, Meditation, Self-examination, or the like, then his next work is to tell them they may plainly see how fruitless and unprofitable those Duties are; and that they should consult their own good much better in laying them all aside for the future, and in easing themselves of the trouble and burthen of them.

3. Satan is wont to assault Christians with the forest temptations, immediately after

after they have been exercised in the most sacred Duties, that if it be possible, he may thereby deprive them of all the comfort with which such duties are usually attended. God often reserves the comforts of such holy exercises till after they are ended: But if the Devil can presently interpose, and be casting in his fiery darts, unless a Christian be very watchful and very well armed against him, 'tis great odds but that he will so manage the matter, as he shall have little comfort in what he hath done. Perhaps instead of comfort in past duties, the Soul may be full of Bitterness, of Gall, and Wormwood, in the sense of its after-miscarriages.

The proper Use of this Point is, To excite us to great Circumspection and Watchfulness, not only in the most sacred and solemn duties of Piety and Religion, but afterwards also. We shall greatly deceive our selves, if we think that Satan's temptations are always confined to the times of our being exercised in Religious Duties: He often reserves his most furious and most dangerous assaults till afterwards. This, if well weighed, cannot but convince us of the necessity of great Watchfulness, after our having been engaged in duties of an extraordinary nature, especially if we also consider the mischievous and pernicious

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designs before mentioned, which Satan hath in assaulting us at such times.

And so much concerning Satan's first temptation, considered with relation to Christ's fasting.

2. It may be also considered with relation to his hungering. He assaulted him when he was now hungry, and in that respect fitter (as he thought) to be wrought upon by that temptation which he assaulted him with. Being hungry, and in the Wilderness where little or no food was to be had, the Devil apprehended he might the more easily be drawn to turn stones into bread for the satisfying of his hunger.

Whence we may observe, That Satan doth cunningly suit his temptations to our present condition. He carefully observes how 'tis with us, in what circumstances we are, what most distresseth or pincheth us, what would most gratify us, which way our hearts lean, and our affections incline; what the Constitution, Complexion, or present Temper of the Body is, what the posture of our Minds is, and accordingly he baits his Hook, and frames his Temptations.

This practice of Satan should teach us that spiritual Wisdom, as to labour to observe our selves, as Satan observes us; and to endeavour to be as well acquainted with our selves as he is. We should labour to  
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find out and understand where our weakness lies, and where we lye most open and exposed to the Temptations of the Devil; what his chief advantages against us are, and where he is most likely to assault us, and prevail over us. And as to know this, is a matter of great importance in order to our safety, so 'tis a matter of no great difficulty, if we can be persuaded to take a little pains in observing our selves. Two things there are which will very much help us to understand where our weakness lies.

1. Let us observe where we often fall, and are most frequently overtaken. We may assure our selves there we are weakest, where our weakness most frequently discovers it self by our relapses into the same sin.

2. Let us also observe where Satan most assaults us. If we do not know where our own weakness lies, we may be sure he doth; we may well conclude that to be the weakest part, against which the enemy most directs his Batteries.

Now having discover'd where our weakness lies, and where Satan's chief advantages against us are, if we would provide for our safety, these things will be further requisite.

1. That we endeavour to strengthen and fortify our selves there where we find we are weakest, by the most pertinent Scri-

Scriptures and strongest Arguments that we can get, and by the firmest purposes and resolutions, that we can engage our selves by.

2. That in the strength of those Scriptures and Arguments, we often renew our Resolutions, and labour to confirm them.

3. That we keep a continual guard and strict watch over our selves where we are weakest.

4. That we be ever looking up to God, and by earnest and importunate Prayer imploring his aid and assistance against the Enemy of our Souls.

5. That we acknowledge him, and give him the glory of all our strength to withstand the Enemy, and repel his Temptations. This course if we take, and with any measure of constancy hold on and persevere in it, will undoubtedly prove successful in the end.

And so much concerning the Time or Season of the Temptation, and the occasion of it.

Another thing considerable, is the Name or Title that is here given to the Devil, he is called the *Tempter*, ὁ πειράζων, the *Tempter*; so he is also called, 1 *Thess.* 3. 5. *I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the Tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.* Now he is called the *Tempter*  
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Emphatically, because he is so eminently and signally.

For 1. He it was that first Tempted Man to Apostacy from God, and drew him off from his Allegiance to his Creator. And the same trade of tempting and seducing Men into Sin and Error he hath ever since driven. Again,

2. He is *the Tempter*, because 'tis his proper work and business, the chief thing which he imployes himself in; the design of his *going to and fro in the earth*, and of his *walking up and down in it*, of his traversing and compassing it, *Job* 1. 7. is, that he may espy and find out opportunities of doing mischief, but especially of doing mischief to the Souls of men, by seducing them into error, and tempting them to sin; *He walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour*, saith St. Peter, *1 Pet.* 5. 8. And how doth he devour men, but by enticing them away from God, by inveigling them into sin, and leading them to eternal destruction?

3. He is called *the Tempter*, because he is the great Master of this wicked Art, and the Head of all that practice it. As for all other Tempters, they are but underlings to him, they are all his Scholars and his Journey-men.

(1.) All other Tempters and Seducers are his Scholars; they learn all their skill in this  
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black Art of tempting and seducing others into sin, from the Devil; as he was a *Liar from the beginning*, and the father of it, so he was a Tempter and a Seducer from the beginning, and the Father of it. All other Tempters and Seducers do but write after the Copy which the Devil hath set them, and exercise that hellish Art which he hath taught them.

(2.) All other Tempters, as they are the Devil's Scholars, so they are his Journey-men, his Instruments, his Agents and Factors; they do the Devil's business, 'tis he that sets them a work and imployes them.

The Uses hereof may be divers.

1. Is the Devil the Tempter? Is it his proper work, and doth he make it his main business to seduce and tempt men? And doth he to this very end, and upon this design, walk up and down continually, traversing and compassing the earth, that he may espy out and meet with opportunities of tempting men? Then should the consideration hereof engage us to continual watchfulness against him, and make us careful to be always prepared to resist him; and to that end to have the Spiritual Armour always about us. If a man knew that he had an implacable Enemy that lay at the catch for him, and was ever waiting for an advantage to do him a mischief, he would never go abroad unarmed; whenso-

ever



ever he went forth, he would be sure to take something along with him for his own defence, that if his Enemy should any where way-lay him, and make a sudden assault upon him, he might not find him unprovided for withstanding him. This is our very case with relation to the Devil; he is ever seeking advantages against us, and way-laying us whithersoever we go; howsoever we are taken up and employed, we are never out of his walk, we are never out of danger from being assaulted by him. Doth it not therefore concern us to be ever watchful, to be ever in a ready posture to withstand him whensoever he shall assault us? Upon this consideration it is, that the Apostle St. *Peter* exhorts us to watchfulness in 1 *Pet.* 5. 8. before-mentioned, *Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.* And here to make us the more watchful, let us consider how dangerous an adversary we have to do with, and how many advantages he hath against us.

1. He is a most malicious Adversary; nothing else but our ruin, the utter destruction of both Soul and Body will satisfy him: Our eternal Perdition is the thing he aims at and designs; or if he cannot effect that, yet at least to make us do that whereby we may wound our own  
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Consciences, disturb our inward Peace, incur the displeasure of God, and draw down upon us the sad effects and consequences of his displeasure.

2. He is a most implacable Adversary. Other Adversaries, how bitter and wrathful, how fierce and how much enraged soever for the present they are, may be reconciled to us, and not only lay aside their displeasure and enmity against us, but of deadly Enemies become sincere and cordial Friends. But the Devil is such an Adversary as will never lay down his rage and malice against us, there will never be the least allay or mitigation thereof; his hatred of us, as 'tis inveterate, he hath ever been possess'd of it against us, so 'tis an immortal and a most incurable hatred; so rank and malignant, so deeply rooted and settled is his malice against us, that it will never out of him as long as he is a Devil, and we shall never be out of the reach of it till we come to Heaven.

3. He is a restless Adversary; he is never weary of attempting to ruin us; though he be beaten back and worsted once and again, yet he renews his batteries against the Soul; if one fiery dart take not, he hath another in a readiness to cast at us; if one temptation prevail not, he will try what another may do; if he cannot overcome us, yet 'tis some content to his malice

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if he can but unsettle us, and create some trouble and disturbance to us.

4. He is a most subtle Adversary ; he hath his wiles, *Ephes. 6. 11.* and his devices, *2 Cor. 2. 11.* and his snares, *2 Tim. 2. 26.* which he cunningly disposeth and layeth where-ever he may be most able to entrap us ; he knows all the ways and methods of deceit whereby unawary Souls may be intangled and taken captive at his will ; he hath all that wicked craft and destructive Policy that almost Six thousand years experience and exercise in the mystery of deluding and perverting, ruining and destroying Souls, could gain him.

5. He being a Spirit, hath invisible access unto us, and can set upon us, and close with us before we are aware of it ; the advantage which his Spiritual Nature gives him against us is such, that he can, as it were, mingle himself with our own Spirits in such a manner, as that his close insinuations and secret motions, his suggestions and cunning practisings with our Souls, can very hardly be discerned oftentimes from the workings and motions of our own spirits.

6. Add hereunto, that he can moreover when occasion is, and as it may best serve his turn, transform himself into an Angel of Light ; he can put his most pernicious Temptations into such a dress, and  
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cloathe them in such a manner, as that they shall seem to be the motions of the Holy Spirit, rather than the insinuations of the Devil; Divine Inspirations, rather than Satanical Suggestions.

These are the advantages he hath against us; and such, and so dangerous an Adversary it is that we are to enter the lists with. What solicitous care and circumspection, what holy jealousy of our selves, and watchfulness against such an Adversary can be too great! And yet I fear, after all that I have said to represent our danger from such an Enemy, I shall be able to prevail with very few to stand upon their guard, and keep so constant and strict a watch as the danger of their condition, and the high concernment of their Souls requireth. Alas! many, perhaps, can hardly persuade themselves that they have any such adversary to conflict with; or if they believe there is such an Enemy of Souls, yet as for themselves, they think they are free enough from being assaulted by him; they know not that they were ever tempted of the Devil in their lives, and hope they are in no danger of his Temptations; they defy the Devil and his temptations with all their heart, and ever did; and therefore they trust he shall never have any power over them. But this is no other than the ignorant and groundless confidence of such

as are neither acquainted with themselves, nor with the dangerous wiles and mischievous artifices of Satan, whereby he seeks to murder Souls. Notwithstanding this their confidence, these Persons may be under the power and dominion of Satan, they may be of the number of those *children of disobedience*, *Ephes. 2. 2.* in whom the *prince of the air, the devil, worketh and rules*. 'Tis most certain, that Satan hath his throne in the hearts of Millions who are not aware of it, and that he rules in Multitudes, and hath them at his command as his Slaves and Vassals, who will be ready to say with those blind and confident Jews, *John 8. 33. We were never in bondage to any.* Satan's Kingdom in the heart of Man, is not so easily discerned by him in whom he reigns, but that he may be mistaken about his condition, and with an high confidence of his being in the right, think better of himself than there is any just cause why he should do so. The Devil is so well skilled in the craft of cheating Souls, that he knows how to rule and govern them as he lists, and yet they shall not know who it is that orders them, and steers their course. He invisibly works in them, influenceth them, and either leads them, or drives them on to do what he would have them, and yet they shall not perceive who hath them in a string, or who rides and acts them.

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Now



Now whereas, 1. You say you were never Tempted of the Devil in your life: The reason of this your dangerous mistake, perhaps may be, that you imagine there are no other temptations of the Devil than those by which men are hurried on to Despair, or urged to make themselves away, or solicited to the commission of some heinous and prodigious Sin, at the thoughts whereof natural Conscience startles. But you consider not that Satan having you fast enough in his clutches by your engagement in some other ways of sin, is not forward to trouble and disquiet you with such black and frightful Temptations; that were, as he well knows, enough to disturb your false peace, and perhaps to fright you out of your sins. There are many other sins less formidable and amazing, and which the Light of Nature doth not rise up against with so much strength and clearness; and these sins however much less frightful, will, if impenitently continued in, as certainly bring you to Hell in the end, as the other. Why therefore should the Devil try such a doubtful and dangerous experiment on you, as to tempt you to the commission of those sins, the ghastly sight and frightful appearance whereof, might, for ought he knows, rouse you up out of your carnal security, and be an occasion of bringing you to Repentance? If Men be once  
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fast asleep in their sins, of what kind or nature soever they be, of what quality or degree soever, 'tis the Devil's great interest to let them alone, and to do nothing whereby they may be disturbed. But if indeed they begin to be awakened out of their sins, if they begin to look about them, and to seek after pardon of sin, then Satan hath another game to play, then his business is, if he can, to drive them to despair of forgiveness, to bear them in hand that there is no Mercy with God for such as they are; then he affrights and amazeth them with the most horrible Temptations that he can make use of to beat them off from pursuing the great work of making their Peace with God, which they are upon.

Again, whereas you say, You defy the Devil and all his Temptations; The Devil will give you leave to defy him in your words, so long as you comply with him and obey him in your actions. The Devil doth but laugh at your big words against him, whilst he knows you to be devoted to his service. Are you one that addict your self to any sinful courses, that allow your self in the practice of any evil? Then, though you defy the Devil a thousand times over, you are his Servant, and that is all that he looks after; so that you do his work, he is contented you should speak against  
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him and reproach him as much as you please.

And so much concerning the first Use.

2. Is the Devil the Tempter? Is it his proper work? And doth he make it his business to seduce men, and draw them away from God? Then take heed of this wicked practice of seducing others, and enticing them into the ways of sin; you herein resemble the Devil, and make your self like him; yea, you hereby manifest your self to be the child of the Devil. When *Elymas* the Sorcerer would have seduced *Sergius Paulus* the Deputy, and have turned him away from the faith; St. Paul, filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, and said, *O full of subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?* Acts 13. 10. And our Saviour speaking unto the wicked and obstinate Jews, *John* 8. 44. said, *Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.* So then, he that tempts another to sin, by doing the lusts of the Devil, declares the Devil to be his Father. Take notice of this, and tremble at your fearful condition, all you whose practice it is to debauch others, and to allure them into the same evil ways, and vicious courses which you have given up your selves unto; to you the words of our Saviour

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our fitly agree, *Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye do ; he was a murderer from the beginning, and so are you.* You are, after his example, guilty of the worst sort of Murther, of the Murther of Souls.

3. Is the Devil the Tempter? Is it his proper work and business to draw men into sin and error? Then beware of Seducers, and run away from them as ye would from the Devil himself; beware of those who would entice you to any evil, who would inveigle you, and prevail with you to go along with them to lewd places and wicked company; who would perswade you to run with them to the same excess of riot. These are the Agents and Instruments of the Devil, they carry on his design, and you may with as much safety give your self up to the guidance and conduct of the Devil himself, as suffer your self to be led by them. As you love your own Soul, and would consult your eternal safety, have nothing to do with them, but keep you as far from them as you can.

This advice *Solomon* often gives and inculcates; *My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not; if they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause, &c. My son, walk not thou in the way with them, refrain thy foot from their path, Prov. 1. 10, 11, 15. So*

cautioning Men against the allurements and enticement of Lewd Women, he saith, *The lips of a strange woman drop as an honey-comb, and her mouth is smother than oyl; but her end is bitter as wormwood, and sharper than a two-edged sword. Hear me now therefore, O ye children, and depart not from the words of my mouth; Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house, Prov. 5. 3, 4, 7, 8. So again, Prov. 7. having set forth, and at large describ'd the wicked arts of the Harlot, he at length concludes, Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth; Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths; for she hath cast down many wounded, yea, many strong men have been slain by her; her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death, v. 24, 25, 26, 27. Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way: be not amongst wine-bibbers, amongst riotous eaters of flesh; for the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty, and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags, Prov. 23. 19, 20, 21.*

Solomon was himself very well acquainted with the danger of Temptations. When a Man shall wilfully and presumptuously cast himself upon them; he knew by his own experience how unsafe it is for any Man to converse familiarly and frequently with those by whom he may either be wholly

wholly drawn off from God, or be allured and seduced into a compliance and partnership with them in sin; and therefore no wonder if he who had in the same kind smarted himself, gave so many serious counsels and useful caveats to others, to beware of coming near that rock which he had so dangerously run himself upon. If all his counsels and caveats signify nothing with Men; if their hearts be so set upon, and do so cleave unto their wicked Acquaintance and lewd Companions, that nothing can divorce them from them; if they be resolved to stop their ears against good counsel, and say with obstinate and incorrigible *Israel*, *Jer. 2. 25. I have loved strangers, and after them will I go*; then 'tis much to be feared that God will in his Righteous Judgment give them up to their own hearts lust, and let them walk in their own counsels, as in that case he is wont to do, and as he dealt with that stiff-necked People, *Psal. 81. 12. that in the end they may receive that just recompence of their sins which they deserve, and he hath threatned. Prov. 1. 29, 30, 31. For that they hated knowledge, and did not chuse the fear of the Lord; they would none of my counsel, they despised all my reproof; therefore shall they eat the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.*



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## The Ninth Sermon.

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M A T T H. IV. 3.

*And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.*

I Have done with the Title that is here given to the Devil, *The Tempter*. The next thing considerable, is the Manner of his addressing himself to Christ when he would tempt him; the Text saith, *That he came to him*. He had been tempting him before, during the whole time of our Saviour's being in the Wilderness; for as I have formerly shewed, St. Luke saith expressly, *that he was forty days tempted of the devil*, Luke 4. 2. After the expiration of which forty days, and after that all those former temptations were ended, 'tis now said, *that when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the son of God, command that these stones be made bread*. By which expressions it may seem that the Devil now came to him in another manner than



than in those his former temptations. Whence some Learned Men conceive it to be very probable, that the Tempter had now assumed some visible shape, in which he came unto Christ, and by an audible voice moved him to turn stones into bread. Thus we know the Devil made use of the Serpent when he tempted *Eve*.

This I the rather take notice of, because it gives me occasion of speaking a word to a Question that may be moved concerning the Apparitions of the Devil; and 'tis this, namely,

Whether the Devil may appear, and under a visible shape offer himself to the view of any good man?

To this I say, 'Tis probable that he so appeared unto Christ, and certain that in and by the Serpent he tempted *Eve*, even while she was yet in the state of Innocency; and therefore there can be no sufficient reason given to the contrary, but that he may in a bodily shape sometimes appear to good men, as well as to others. 'Tis indeed a sore affliction, especially to be often frightened in that manner; but yet 'tis no certain Mark, or infallible Character of a wicked man, much less of a Reprobate, as neither is any other outward Affliction whatsoever. Where hath God in his Word secured his Children against it? By what Promise hath he assured them, That no such thing shall

shall ever befall any of his? Besides, Why may not God permit Satan visibly to appear and represent himself sometimes to the outward senses of his own, as well as to have access to their souls inwardly by his temptations? Why may he not as well permit the Devil to appear to them, as to possess them, as we know he did *Mary Magdalen*, out of whom seven Devils were cast?

Now there is a double Use that may be made of what hath been said.

1. It may serve to relieve any that are thus afflicted, against a temptation wherewith they may be assaulted. Perhaps they may be tempted to despair of Mercy; the Devil himself may be likely to tell them, That they belong not to Christ, nor shall they ever have any benefit by him; for if they were such as belong to him, and had an interest in him, God would never permit the Devil to terrify and amaze them by such frightful Apparitions? But as hath been said, How can it be proved, that God never permits the Devil to appear to any of those that belong to Christ? What have we in Scripture, whereby God hath declared so much? Where hath he undertaken so to limit, restrain, and chain up Satan, as that he shall have no power to appear unto any, but such as are his own, such as are out of Christ, and have no interest in that Salvation which he hath obtained for all truly penitent

penitent and believing sinners? If there be no ground in Scripture for it, as certainly there is not, then no man that is so afflicted, ought to be so troubled, disquieted, and discouraged upon that account, as if his condition must needs be desperate, and as if there were no hope of salvation for him. Let such a one *give all diligence to make his calling and election sure*; and so doing, let him never question his Salvation.

2. What hath been said, should also keep us from judging the spiritual and eternal estate of any, merely upon the account of such an affliction. Though God, for just, wise, and gracious ends, unknown to us, may suffer the Devil thus to scare and terrify them, yet may they, notwithstanding such a dispensation, belong to the Election of Grace, and perhaps be at present in the state of Grace; and therefore it were rash and unwarrantable for us to pass any absolute and peremptory judgment upon them, with relation to their eternal condition.

So I come in the next place to speak of the Temptation it self; *If thou be the son of God, command that these stones be made bread.* Our Saviour had lately at his Baptism received a Testimony of his Sonship from Heaven, in that voice, *This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.* Now here the Devil endeavours to weaken his belief  
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of the truth of that Celestial Oracle, and to make him call in question, whether he were indeed the Son of God, as that Voice declared him to be, or no? If the Devil were so bold and impudent as to assault the Eternal Son of God with this temptation, and this also when he had been lately declared to be the Son of God, by a Voice from Heaven; we need not wonder that this Father of Lies should in the same manner assault the adopted Sons of God, tempting them to question their Adoption. There is indeed scarce any temptation which he more frequently assaults them with, than this; God so permitting it to be, that herein also, as in other things, the Members might be conformable to the Head.

'Tis true, as long as men are in their sins, as long as they are out of Christ, as long as they are such as God owns them not for his adopted Children, so long the Devil doth what he can, to build them up in a false persuasion and groundless belief that they are the Children of God. For so long as he can keep them in that good opinion of themselves, he is very sure that he hath fast hold of them, so as there is no danger of their escaping out of his hands, and getting away from him. They who are possessed with a fond belief and groundless confidence that they are in a safe condition, why should they endeavour to better their condition?



condition? The Devil knows full well, that this their Erroneous persuasion of their being already the adopted Children of God, absolutely suppresseth and shuts out all endeavours whereby they might come to be indeed what they presumptuously, ignorantly, and erroneously fancy themselves to be.

But as for such as are in the number of God's Children, the Devil useth all his malicious cunning to deceive them on the other hand, and to make them doubt of their adoption. As 'tis Satan's interest to make others believe they are the Children of God; so it is no less his interest to make these believe or fear they are not. The advantages which the Devil gains by persuading a Child of God, that he is not the Child of God, or by making him stagger and doubt concerning it, are diverse.

1. Hereby he causeth much groundless trouble and disquiet to them, whereby he makes their lives heavy and uncomfortable.

2. Hereby he discourageth them in the performance of their Duty; and also much weakens and disables them for being serviceable to God. For how can they go on chearfully and vigorously in the ways of Obedience and Service, who are full of fears and anxious jealousies about their Estate, and consequently are also doubtful



ful of their acceptance with God in what they do? For as far as any Man doubts concerning his adoption, so far also must he needs doubt concerning the acceptance of his Services with God.

3. Hereby others also are beaten off from coming in to Christ, and prejudiced against Religion, the Profession whereof affordeth so little Peace, Comfort, and Establishment to the Professors thereof.

4. This their dissatisfaction and doubting concerning their adoption, lays them open, and exposeth them to many other temptations; as namely, to think hardly of God's dealing with them, to question the truth of his Promises, to distrust his Providence, to be weary of his Service. All these Temptations may Satan easily fasten upon him that doubts whether he belongs to God, and be of the number of his Children, or no; and much more if he be one that excludes himself from that number, and persuades himself that God doth not own him as his Child, but looks upon him as a Stranger and an Alien from his Covenants.

*Use.* This shews how much it concerns the Children of God to labour to be well armed and provided against this temptation. There is no Child of God that can make account to be always free from being assaulted with it: He that is strongest, that hath

hath the fullest and clearest satisfaction concerning his adoption, and that hath attained unto the greatest measure of Steadfastness and Establishment, may be shaken, and be brought to question his adoption; yea, perhaps, not only to question it, but to conclude against himself, that he belongs not to God; and that he was deluded when he had other thoughts of himself. Now to the end you may be armed against this temptation which is so dangerous, as giving Satan so many and great advantages against a Man, and which no Child of God can expect to be always exempted from: I say, to the end you may be well armed against it.

1. Be sure that you lay a good Foundation at first; get it well and soundly cleared up to you, That you are God's adopted Child: Build not your Confidence and Persuasion hereof upon the Sand: Among other things, there are two weak and sandy Foundations, on which many build, a false persuasion of their relation to God as his Children, and their interest in him as their Father.

1. Outward Prosperity: They thrive and prosper in the World; all things succeed well with them, and they have whatever heart can wish; whence they are ready to infer, That certainly God owns them as his Children; for otherwise he would

would not thus bless them, and shew himself so kind and bountiful to them. But all this may be, and yet God may look on them as his Enemies. *He causeth his Sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust, Mat. 6. 45. He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil, Luk. 6. 35. God filleth the bellies of wicked men with his hid treasure, the men of the world who have their portion in this life,* as the Psalmist describes them, *Psal. 17. 14.* They will therefore greatly deceive themselves, who having no better evidence of their adoption, from this alone conclude themselves to be the Children of God: An afflicted and unprosperous condition were a better Argument of the two, than outward prosperity; because Troubles and Afflictions are the Lot of God's Children in this World; according to that of the Apostle, *Heb. 12. 6, 7, 8. Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every Son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with his Sons; for what Son is there whom the Father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye Bastards and not Sons.* Though indeed neither are Afflictions, unless they be sanctified, a sound argument to prove any man to be the Child of God. We see by experience, that many Wicked and Ungodly persons,

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whom

whom surely God acknowledgeth not for his Children, are in respect of outward Troubles and Afflictions extreamly miserable: All their Miseries and Calamities do not work upon them to make them better: Many times they are rather the worse for their sufferings, than the better: Their Afflictions that should bring them nearer to God, drive them farther away from him. 'Tis with them as it was with wicked *Abaz*, 2 Chron. 29. 22. *Who in his distress trespassed yet more against the Lord.*

2. Another weak and sandy Foundation, on which many build their deceitful confidence touching their adoption, is their being free from inward Troubles: They hear of the Terrors and inward Perplexities, the Anguish and Trouble of Conscience that many complain of, and of the doubtings, fears, and jealousies of themselves and their condition to God-wards that others are possessed of; but for their part, they have been always free from such troubles; they never distrusted themselves, or questioned their condition; they never doubted of their adoption, and therefore why should they now begin to doubt of it? Is their condition become less safe now? Is there more danger of it now than there has been all along hitherto? As they have thus far maintained a steady and unshaken con-



confidence of the soundness of their Estate, so they are resolved still to do ; nothing shall rob or deprive them of it ; nothing shall unsettle or disquiet them. This resolution were very good, I grant, if there were a good Foundation of their confidence. But alas ! the Foundation which they build on, is a rotten and sinking Foundation, which will never be able to bear so great a weight as they lay on it : You persuade your self to be the Child of God, because you never doubted of it, much less were you ever under that sore anguish of Spirit and inward perplexities, that many others have Conflicted with, and long Groaned under the burthen of it. But thus arguing, you are under a great and palpable mistake : There can be no more clear and pregnant Argument to prove your Spiritual State to be extreamly bad and dangerous, than that which you make use of to prove it to be good. The certain knowledge of your own adoption is not a thing so easily attained as you imagine : No man comes without much difficulty, and many sore Conflicts with his own Darkness and Unbelief, to be well settled concerning his adoption : Many fears, and many doubtings there are about it, much wavering and unsettledness, before he comes to any right and well-grounded Establishment. Very many, and some of those



not the most lazy and negligent Christians, are at a loss about it all their days : And do you make this an Argument of your adoption, that you were never troubled about it, but have ever enjoyed inward Peace and Tranquility ? Be not deceived in a matter of such high concernment to you : 'Tis a false and unsound Peace which that Soul is possessed of, that never was acquainted with inward trouble. Sound Peace is after trouble, right Establishment after doubting, and the Spirit of Adoption comes after the Spirit of Bondage ; as may be gathered from that of the Apostle, Rom. 8. 15. *Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear ; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father.* So then in this order God wrought on them ; First they received the Spirit of Bondage, and then the Spirit of Adoption : And the same Method he observeth in working upon all whom he brings into the State of Adoption. First, He by his Spirit convinceth of Sin and Guilt, and humbles them ; makes them full of solicitous Thoughts and Fears about their Eternal Condition ; makes them look out after Christ, and at length makes them willing to receive him upon the Terms of the Gospel ; that is, to disclaim and renounce all trust in themselves, and their own performances, to forsake their Sins, and  
to

to give up themselves to his Government ; and then he lets them know , and by his Spirit persuades them , that he is through Christ become their Father, and that he owns them for his adopted Children ; that is, he bestows upon them the Spirit of adoption. Hath this been the course that God hath taken with you ? Hath he in this order, and by this Method brought you into that state of adoption in which, as you make account, you stand ? Have you had Experience of these things in your self ? Have you been in some good measure experimentally acquainted with them ? If you have, then may you rest satisfied, that you have laid a good Foundation , and not built the confidence you have of your adoption, upon the Sand ; which was the first thing to be done, that we may be well armed and provided against the temptations of the Devil, whereby he endeavours to make us question our adoption.

2. Labour to be still more and more confirmed touching your adoption : Though you seem to be well established, yet rest not in what you have attained, but be still pressing after further degrees of establishment , which must be done by giving all diligence to make your Calling and Election still more and more sure : You may think your self strong for the present, and very well able to withstand the Tempta-

tions of the Devil ; but when you are assaulted , you may find your self weak : Then all the strength you shall have attained , will appear to be little enough to make resistance : Wherefore think it not a needless thing for you to be still labouring to get clearer evidences of your adoption : That is a matter of such importance , as you can never be too solicitous about it : If there be any flaw in your Evidences, the Devil will be sure to find it out, and make use of it against you in the hour of Temptation.

3. Be ever careful so to walk as Satan may have no advantage against you from your irregular Conversation, to make you question your adoption , and as God may not be provoked to take away the Spirit of adoption from you , and to bring you under the Spirit of Bondage again. Now that which gives Satan the greatest advantage against a Child of God to make him question his adoption, and most provokes God to take away the Spirit of adoption, and to bring the Soul again under the Spirit of Bondage , is when he shall either sin presumptuously against God, or when there shall be a general backsliding Defection, and declining , a general slackness and remissness in the course of his Life.

1. As for presumptuous sins ; these give Satan a great advantage to tempt a Believer

ver to call in question his adoption : For how can you be the Child of God as you pretend to be, saith the Devil, who knowingly and deliberately venture upon sin ? Do you think that any Child of God sins in that manner ? And as presumptuous sins give Satan a great advantage against the Children of God ; so they highly provoke God, and give him just cause to take away from them the sense of his love, and the comforts of his Spirit, and so far to give them up to the power of their unbelief, and to Satan, as that they may not only question their adoption, but really apprehend themselves to be in the state of Damnation, and under the Wrath of God. This hath been the sad condition of many of God's Children, whom for their presumptuous sins God hath for the time thus forsaken. The Condition of *David* after his presumptuous sins, his Adultery and Murther, seems to have been little better, when he cried out, *Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice*, Psal. 51. 8. And, *Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy holy Spirit from me ; restore unto me the joy of thy Salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit*, ver. 11, 12.

2. When there is a general declining and backsliding, an universal carelessness, slackness, and remissness in the whole



course of a Christian's Life ; This also gives Satan an occasion of suggesting to him, that these things plainly discover that he is no Child of God , and that he never was in the state of Grace and Salvation ; so much carelessness and remissness ; such inconstancy in holy Duties ; such frequent neglect of them, or slowness and formality in the performance of them , and so many disorders and miscarriages as he is otherwise guilty of, cannot be found in any that may call God Father. Thus will the Devil from a Christian's negligence and carelessness, his decays and backslidings, persuade him that he doth not belong to God, nor may reckon himself among the Children of God : And so likewise for the same miscarriages in the general course of a Man's Life, doth God often withdraw the Comforts of his Holy Spirit, and the Sense of his Adopting-Love, that he may thereby humble him, heal his backslidings, and recover him.

The sum of all is this , He that would be armed against Satan's Temptations, whereby he endeavours to bring men to question their adoption, and that would give Satan no advantage for disturbing his peace , nor provoke God to leave him to the Darkness and Unbelief of his own heart, and to the power of Temptations ; must carefully avoid all presumptuous sin,  
and



and take heed of decays and declining, of carelessness and remissness in the general course of his Life, keeping close unto God, and walking with him in a steady course of universal Obedience ; he must be careful not only to keep what he hath attained, but to improve it ; still pressing on towards higher degrees of strictness and conscientiousness. He that shall so do, shall neither give Satan an advantage against him, nor provoke God to forsake him, and take away the sense and comforts of his Fatherly Love from him : And this might have sufficed to have been spoken touching the Temptation, and so I might have gone on to speak of Christ's reply thereunto ; but that two Questions may here be moved, which I shall first briefly speak unto.

*Quest. 1.* What encouragement could the Devil have to tempt the Eternal Son of God, who is himself over all God blessed for ever, of the same Divine Nature and Essence with the Father, co-equal and co-eternal with him, as *Athanasius* speaks ? Could the Tempter have any hopes that he should ever be able to make him question his being the Son of God ? Could the Devil think that any thing which he should suggest would ever beget or raise in him the least doubt or scruple concerning it ?

A. 1.

A. 1. We must here consider, That though the Devil could not hope that his Temptations would make any evil impressions upon the Divine Nature, yet perhaps he had some hopes that they might work upon the Human Nature: Though it be supposed that Satan knew the Human Nature of Christ to be perfectly free from sin; yet he knew also that so was *Adam* by Creation, and yet he was overcome by temptation, and drawn into sin: The Devil perhaps might not know, or such was his rage and malice against Christ, that he might not consider that the Humane Nature in him was so confirmed and established in Holiness through the Influences and Supports of the Godhead, that no Temptation could fasten any sin upon it: Though he had no sufficient ground of confidence that he should prevail, yet he knew not what might be done, and therefore he would try.

2. As to this particular Temptation whereby the Devil endeavoured to make him doubt whether he were the Son of God, or no; the Union of the Godhead, and the Human Nature in One Person being so deep and wonderful a Mystery, 'tis probable that the Devil might think it not impossible, but that the Human Nature in Christ might be so wrought on by a Temptation, as at least to be made to waver and stagger about it.

3. But

3. But besides, this was not the only thing, nor perhaps the principal thing that the Devil aimed at in this Temptation: There were several other sins which he might, and questionless did endeavour by this temptation to draw him into, as I shall presently shew.

4. If Satan had no hopes of prevailing, yet was his Malice pleased and gratified, in having thus assaulted the Son of God; and in having been able to give any trouble, though sinless trouble on Christ's part, to the Human Nature: If he had little or no hopes of drawing him into sin, yet it was some pleasure to his wicked nature to have molested him. And so much by way of Answer to that Question.

*Quest. 2.* Another Question may be this: How doth it appear that there was any Temptation at all in what the Devil here in the first place propounded unto Christ, and put him upon? A Temptation, as we here take the word, is an inducing or solliciting one to sin. But what sin was there, you will say, in what the Devil would have had Christ do? What Moral evil was there in working a Miracle? Had not Christ often done it? Did he not work other Miracles that were much of the same nature with this which the Devil would now have had him work? Did he not turn Water into Wine? And why should there be sin in turning Stones into Bread, rather

rather than in turning Water into Wine? So again, he multiplied a few Loaves into a very great quantity of Bread when the multitude was an hungred and had nothing to eat : And was not this Christ's very case here? Was he not an hungred, and in the Wilderness where there was nothing to satisfy his hunger? So then it may seem that the turning Stones into Bread had been a very useful and seasonable Miracle : Besides, if he wrought a Miracle for others, why not for himself? If he by Miracle turned Water into Wine for the more liberal and plentiful supply of Wine at the Marriage-Feast, for delight of the Guests rather than necessity ; Why might he not turn Stones into Bread, upon his present hunger, and the want of Food in the Wilderness ; which might seem to make it upon the matter necessary? Lastly, he might moreover by this Miracle have shewed his Divine Power, and demonstrated himself to be the Son of God. So that it may seem that such a Miracle at this time, and upon this occasion, had not been a matter of meer Curiosity, but of great use and importance.

This is that which may be said to make it seem to be no Temptation.

But there are two or three things in the Text that clearly confute and overthrow all this, how plausible soever it may seem to be.

1. The



1. The Text saith, *That our Saviour was led by the Spirit into the Wilderness to be tempted of the Devil*; and then presently this, together with two other temptations, is mentioned; which plainly shews it to be of the same nature with the other two; else why should it be recited together with them?

2. 'Tis expressly said, The Tempter came to him, and said, *If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread*. Wherefore as a Tempter he then came to him, and put him upon turning Stones into Bread.

3. Our Saviour's reply sheweth it to have been a temptation; for refusing to comply with the Tempter's motion, he urgeth Scripture against it, as he did against the other Temptations. A Temptation then it was; yea, a very sore and dangerous Temptation, whether we consider the sins which Christ was thereby solicited to commit; or the difficult and perplexed nature of the Temptation.

1<sup>st</sup>. And the sins which by this Temptation the Devil would have drawn Christ into, were divers. As, namely,

(1.) Distrust of God's Providence, as if he could not provide for him, and supply him with sustenance without a Miracle.

(2.) Doubting of the truth of that Voice from Heaven: *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased*.

(3.) Ofsen-



(3.) Ostentation, and an Affectation of Vain-glory, by shewing his power before the Devil.

4. In the Judgment of Learned men, barely to have hearkened to the Devil, and to have complied with the motion by him made, though it had been in a thing otherwise very lawful, could not have been done without sin; because that wicked and malicious Spirit never makes any motion, how harmless soever in it self, but with some evil intention, and mischievous design. This being therefore always to be supposed and presumed that the Devil hath ever some evil intention in whatever he propounds, he ought not to be hearkened to, though he should move a man to do that which in it self considered hath no evil in it. Thus we have seen how fore and dangerous this temptation was in respect of the sins which the Devil would by it have drawn Christ into.

27. It was also a fore temptation, in regard of the difficulty and perplexity thereof. For if Christ should have wrought this Miracle at the Tempter's motion, he had thereby gratified the Devil, and complied with his desire, and he had seemed to be guilty of all the other sins before-mentioned: And on the other side, refusing to do it, he might seem to be wanting to himself, as neither supplying himself with

with necessary sustenance, nor vindicating his Godhead, and giving a demonstration of his Divine Power by a Miracle. But in this difficult and perplexed case our Saviour took the most wise and safe course, by rejecting the Devil's proposal.

Christ considered very well, That if he had wrought that Miracle to give proof of his Deity, there was no man present in the Wilderness to have received any benefit thereby; and as for the Devil, he was so hardened in his sin, that he was incapable of being bettered by it: So as the case stood, it had been to no purpose to have wrought a Miracle; and our Saviour never shewed forth the Glory of his Divine Power by Works of an Extraordinary and Miraculous nature, but where it might be really useful and beneficial.

Then as for vindicating the Honour of his Godhead and Divine Power, he could do that upon other occasions, as he should see cause; but he did not think himself concerned now to vindicate it before the Devil, whose Malice would have made him except against, and Cavil at whatsoever should or could have been done in vindication thereof.

Lastly, As for the exigency of his present condition, he was indeed an hungry, and in a place where there was no food, but he knew the Providence of God on  
which

which he relied, could easily supply his wants, without his recourse to a Miracle.

And this leads me from the Temptation, to Christ's reply, in the Fourth Verse : But he answered, and said, *It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.* These words are cited out of the 8th Chapter of *Deut.* and the 3d. Verse, where *Moses* speaking unto the *Israelites*, concerning God's dealing with them in the Wilderness, saith, *He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with Manna, which thou knewedst not, neither did thy Fathers know; that he might make thee know, that man liveth not by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.* Now though the words by Christ alledged, were uttered by *Moses* with relation to Manna; yet have they a more general sense, and so may be applied to any thing else which God makes use of, and commands his Blessing on for the sustenance of man's Life. Whatsoever thing it is that hath the Word of the Command or Blessing of God for the support and preservation of Life, that shall according to God's Appointment be sufficient and effectual for that end: Yea, more, if God speak the Word, that the Life of man be sustained without all means, it shall be done : So far is Bread from being absolutely

lutely necessary for the support of man's Life. 'Tis true, according to the ordinary course of God's Providence, Bread is the Staff of Life ; but if Bread be wanting, God can make any thing else that he pleaseth to make use of, a Staff to support Life as well as Bread : Or, if he think fit, he can lay aside all second causes, and become the Staff of Life himself ; sustaining it by the immediate supports of his own Almighty Arm. By what hath been said, it appears that notwithstanding all the Objections and Cavils of men, of Prophane and Atheistical Spirits, nothing could have been more proper, full, and pertinent to our Saviour's purpose, than this Portion of Scripture by him alledged. The Devil observing him to be hungry in the Wilderness, where no food was to be had, perswaded him to turn stones into bread, that he might thereby both supply his present wants, and moreover demonstrate himself to be the Son of God : Our Saviour in effect replies, That there was no need of his having recourse to a Miracle for his sustenance, seing God could in the defect of Bread many other ways sustain him : Neither was his Providence confined to Bread as the only means by which man's Life is preserved. It is written, saith he, *That man liveth not by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*

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Here a Question may be moved ; Why Christ would thus reply upon the Devil, and answer him ? Why he had not rather severely rebuked him for his boldness and insolency, or by his Divine Power silenced him ?

*Ans.* Christ, we see, rather chose to answer him, than to rebuke or silence him ; and therefore we must thence conclude that to have been the wisest and fittest course that could be taken with him ; otherwise he would not have made choice of it. What the Son of God, the Wisdom of the Father pitched on, must needs be best.

If it be here objected , That Christ knew the Devil to be incorrigible , he knew him to be so confirmed in his implacable hatred of God, and of his Image in Man, as that there could be no hopes of doing any good upon him. To what end therefore should he reply to his Temptations, seeing it would be but a casting Pearl before Swine ?

*A.* Our Saviour in answering Satan, had not respect to his, but our good : Though the Devil would receive no benefit by Christ's Replies, yet we mightundry ways.

1. Hereby Christ taught us how we should withstand the Devil, and with what Weapons we should repel his Temptations.

2. Here-



2. Hereby he gave us an example of Patience and Meekness in our carriage towards the worst and the most rank and most irreconcilable Enemies.

3. Hereby he taught us Humility, and a careful avoidance of Ostentation, and Vain-glory.

4. Hereby there was an occasion given of our being acquainted with some of the chief temptations of Satan, and with his manner and way of managing them: Whereas if our Saviour had silenced the Devil at first, there would have been no place for those other Temptations, whereby more of his Methods and Course in tempting was discovered.

5. It was also more for the Honour of Christ to have overcome the Devil by Patience and Scripture, than by Power.

Now the Observations from our Saviour's reply unto Satan may be diverse.

1. Whereas our Saviour thought fit to reply unto the temptations of Satan, and to answer them, we may observe, that the temptations of the Devil are not to be slighted; but sound and substantial Answers are to be made unto them, and to be opposed against them: And this is more especially to be done where the Devil suggesteth any Reason or Scripture to back his Temptations. The neglect hereof creates a great deal of trouble to many

tempted Souls; for the temptations being not answered, Satan upon all occasions reneweth his assaults, and comes on afresh with the same temptations; pressing them in the same manner, and with greater violence, because he sees nothing is replied to them for the weakening of the force of them. But if his Temptations were once well answered, he would not be so ready to renew them: The successfulness and benefit of this course may appear from the issue of those replies which our Saviour made to the several temptations wherewith he was assaulted: For we do not find that Satan ever assaulted him with the same temptation after it had been solidly answered, but still falls off, and betakes himself to another temptation. 'Tis true, the Devil often injects horrible things into the minds of men, without any Scripture, Argument, or Reason to enforce them. In that case, such sudden horrid suggestions must instantly be resisted, and cast out of the mind as fast as the Devil casts them in. But this is not all that is to be done when wicked suggestions are back'd with Reason or Scripture, as they were in the several instances here in the Text. In that case 'tis requisite that something by way of reply be opposed against those abused Scriptures and Reasons: And it is much for the quiet and safety

safety of the Soul that this should speedily be done. There are two or three considerable advantages from this course.

1. It confirms and strengthens the Soul of the tempted against the temptation; whereas if there be nothing to oppose against the temptation, the Soul is weak and disarmed, and *like a City broken down and without Walls*, as *Solomon* speaks, lies open to the violence and incursion of the Enemy.

2. It rebates and weakens the force of temptation: When a clear and solid reply is made to a temptation, and 'tis sufficiently answered, it loseth its strength, and becomes of no force.

3. It also damps and discourageth Satan: When a Temptation is soundly answered, he hath small hopes of prevailing, and so he desisteth. But if no answer be opposed against his temptation, he hath never done with it; he incessantly reneweth and reinforceth it so long, till at length he prevaieth. Wherefore they are much to be blamed, as being greatly wanting to themselves, and not providing as they might and ought for their own quiet and safety, who being unable to answer the temptations of the Devil themselves, never impart their condition to others, desiring their help and assistance. Thus keeping the Devil's counsel, they lengthen out their

own troubles and dangers, and give Satan as great encouragement to be still molesting them, as he can desire. So much concerning Christ's replying to the temptation.

2. Whereas our Saviour opposeth Scripture against all Satan's temptations, we may observe, That Scripture is the best Weapon that we can make use of when Satan assaults us: If there had been any better, we may be sure our Saviour would have made use of it. But he still making use of this, hath by his own practice recommended it to us. Upon this account it is that the Apostle calls the Word of God *the Sword of the Spirit*, and mentions it as a special part of the spiritual armour, *Ephes. 6. 17.* Hence we may learn several things,

1. How much it concerns all to labour to be acquainted with the Scriptures, without the knowledge whereof we are unfurnished with those spiritual weapons with which the Devil is to be resisted.

2. We may hence learn how much they wrong themselves, and stand in their own light, who neglect to make use of, and improve the means of Scripture-knowledge afforded them, and rather chuse to Live and Dye in ignorance, than to take any pains to acquaint themselves with the Holy Scriptures. These miserable people wilfully expose themselves to the temptations  
of



of the Devil, who being always in a readiness to take advantage of their ignorance, may delude and ensnare them, and lead them captive as he pleaseth.

3. This also informs us, how great their sin is, who deprive poor Souls of the means of knowledge, and do whatever they can to keep them in ignorance. Deeply and horridly guilty this way is the Church of *Rome*, that permits not the Common people to have the perusal of the Holy Scriptures in a Tongue which they understand; and this to the end they may not by the light of Scriptures, come to see the dangerous Errors, and foul Corruptions of their Church. What is this but to betray innumerable Souls to Everlasting Destruction, and to put an opportunity into the hand of their spiritual Enemy, to lead them hood-wink'd to Hell? This is that heinous sin which Christ chargeth upon the Guides and Leaders of the Jewish Church, for which he pronounceth a Woe against them. *Woe unto you Lawyers, saith he, for ye have taken away the key of knowledge, Luk. 11. 52. And woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites, for ye shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against men; for ye neither go in your selves, neither suffer ye them that are entering, to go in, Mat. 23. 13.* Do not the Pharisees of the Church of *Rome*, tread just in the steps



of these Ancient Pharisees, and imitate their practice to the life? And doth not their woe belong to these also? Whatever they may now think, or whatever pretences they may seem to have to palliate and cover the horrid evil of this their Soul-destroying practice, they will certainly find, that an heavy sentence awaits them when God shall call them to an account, and charge upon them the Blood of so many Millions of Souls as have in all probability through this their ungodly practice eternally miscarried. In the mean time how thankful doth it behove us to be, that God hath brought us out from under that miserable Bondage; that he hath set us at Liberty, and vouchsafed us the free perusal of the Holy Scriptures in a Tongue which we understand; and that notwithstanding all attempts that have been made by the Enemies of God and his Truth, to extinguish the light which God hath caused to shine amongst us, and to wrest the Key of Knowledge out of our hands, God hath been graciously pleased still to disappoint them, by strange and wonderful discoveries of their horrid Counsels, and Bloody Desigus; an Eminent instance whereof we have lately had: Let us all stir up our selves to be duly sensible of, and thankful for these great and inestimable mercies: Let us improve the means of

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Knowledge which we do enjoy, and walk suitably to the light which God affords us: If we can thus do, then we need not question but that God will still own us in the Profession of his Truth, stand by us, and appear for us; still uphold us and protect us, maugre all the hellish designs of men of seared Consciences, implacable malice, and restless wickedness.

Another thing observable, which I have touched at before, is our Saviour's carriage when the Devil questioned his Deity, and tempted him to give a demonstration of it by working a Miracle, saying, *If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.*

1. Our Saviour, though provoked and urged to vindicate his Deity, and shew forth his Divine Power by turning Stones into Bread, was so far from being forward to shew who he was, and what he could do, that he utterly refused to do it.

2. He spake not one word concerning his Deity or his Power: He was wholly silent concerning it, neither affirming nor denying himself to be the Son of God; and contenting himself to make no other Answer then this only, *It is Written, Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.* And herein he hath made himself a great example unto us of self-denial and humility.

How

How apt are many men to be greedily catching at any thing that may give them an occasion of setting forth themselves, of declaring what they have been, and what they have done, what they are, and what they can do? How doth the whole stream of their Language run in this Channel? How do they studiously and industriously turn all the Discourse this way, picking up from whatever is said or done, matter of self-commendation; matter of empty Boasting, and Vain Ostentation of themselves and theirs; whereas a modest silence in what concerns our selves and ours, would much better become us, and be more suitable to the pattern that Christ hath set us; as also be much more acceptable to all modest, sober, and intelligent persons with whom we converse.

In the next place we may observe, That the Devil when he intends us the greatest mischief, will pretend to a regard of our good, yea, and of the Glory of God also sometimes. So here when he intended nothing else but to draw our Saviour into the sins before mentioned, he would seem to have a care of the supply of his present wants; and he would suggest unto him a way by which he might undeniably prove his Divine Power, and demonstrate himself to be the Son of God. But these fair pretences could not prevail with Christ

to make him hearken to the Devil's motions, and make use of that expedient which he had found out for him. Thus when the Devil tempted our First Parents, he made them believe that by eating of the forbidden Fruit, they should come to be as Gods, knowing good and evil.

This should teach us to take heed that the fair pretences of the Devil or his Instruments, never so work upon us as to make us adventure to do any thing that is contrary to our duty ; in all things that are proposed to us, and laid before us, our eye must not be so much upon the Ends that are held forth to us, as upon the Rule, that we may conform our selves thereunto ; ever remembring, that we may not do evil that good may come thereby ; not the least evil for attaining or procuring the greatest good.





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## The Tenth Sermon.

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### M A T T H. IV. 4.

— *Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*

**T**H E R E is yet one thing more remaining to be spoken to in Christ's Reply to this first temptation, and 'tis indeed the principal thing; the main substance of his reply; Christ answers the Devil, That, *Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*; whereby he signifies, that in defect of Bread, the Providence of God could afford and make use of many other means for his sustenance, and therefore there was no necessity of his working a Miracle to sustain himself: Whence we may observe these Two points.

1. That in all our wants and straits we must depend on the Providence of God for our supplies.

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2. That our dependance on God's Providence is the best means to keep us from making use of unlawful means to relieve our selves : Of these in order.

1. In all our wants and straits we must depend on the Providence of God : This our dependance on God's Providence, and our reliance on him for succour and relief in all our wants and extremities, is that which the Scriptures frequently enjoin, and call upon us for, *Cast thy burthen upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee*, Ps. 55. 22. As all other burthens, so the burthen of supplying our wants, and relieving us in our necessity : *Cast your care upon the Lord, for he careth for you*, 1 Pet. 5. 7. *Be careful for nothing, but in every thing let your request be made known unto God*, Phil. 4. 6. *Take no thought for to morrow, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed? For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things*, Matth. 6. 31, 32. Now as we are often called upon, and required to depend on God's Providence in all our wants and exigences, so we have many encouragements thereunto; many Arguments and Considerations to strengthen our dependance on God. Some of the chief, are these that follow :

1. God hath been pleased to engage himself by many Gracious Promises, to relieve

relieve his people in their distresses, and to supply them with all needful things, Psal. 34. 9, 10. *O fear the Lord ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear him. The young Lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing,* Psal. 37. 3. *Trust in the Lord and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the Land, and verily thou shalt be fed,* Psal. 84. 11. *The Lord God is a sun and a shield; the Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly,* Isai. 33. 15, 16. *He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; he shall dwell on high, his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks, bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure,* Matth. 6. 33. *Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you,* 1 Tim. 4. 8. *Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come,* Heb. 13. 5. *Be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.*

2. Another thing to encourage and strengthen our dependance on God's Providence, is our own experience of his care  
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of us heretofore, the seasonable Provisions he hath made for us, and the supplies which he hath given in to us. You have often been reduced to such straits as you knew not what to do, or which way to turn your self: You have, it may be, often in your extremities been tempted to distrust God's Providence, and to call in question the truth of his Promises. But however, you have found that though we believe not, *yet God is faithful*; as the Apostle speaks, *2 Tim. 2. 13*. He hath most seasonably supplied your wants when you least looked for it, and whence you least expected it: And when God has thus manifested his care of you, How have you Blamed and Condemned your self for your distrust of his Providence, and been ashamed that ever you should entertain such unworthy thoughts of him, that was never a Barren Wilderness, or a Land of Darknes to you, who was never wanting to you in your greatest necessities.

3. The Consideration of the Proenonsa which he makes even for unreasonable Creatures, should encourage and strengthen our dependance on God's Providence. This Argument our Saviour makes use of, *Matt. 6. 26. Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?* This general



heral Providence of God which supplies the wants of all Creatures, even of the Beasts, the Psalmist more than once takes notice of, and extols the bounty and goodness of God therein. *The eyes of all do wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing,* Psal. 145. 15, 16. *Sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving, who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains. He giveth to the beast his food, to the young ravens which cry,* Psal. 147. 7, 8, 9. Now as our Saviour argues in the place before mentioned, If God be thus pleased to provide for all living Creatures, and to supply the wants of the Beast, will he not much more look after and provide for Mankind, and especially for those amongst men whom he owns for his Children, and vouchsafeth to be called their Father?

4. Another thing that may encourage and strengthen our dependence on God in all wants and distresses, is the Consideration of his transcendent Bounty and Goodness, and of the plentiful supplies which he is pleased to afford the worst of men, his very Enemies. *He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust,* Matth. 5. 45. *He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil,*

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Luk. 6. 35. *He fills the belly of wicked men with his hid treasure*, Psal. 17. 14. *They have more than heart can wish*, Psal. 73. 7. And can it be that he should be wanting to his own in what is needful for them? Will he pour in superfluities upon his Enemies, and not furnish his Children with Necessaries? Take heed that you harbour no such thoughts of him.

5. For the strengthening of your dependence on God's Providence, consider, That if you belong to God, he hath done far greater things for you than to supply you with Necessaries for this Life. He hath bestowed his Eternal and Onely Begotten Son upon you; and what poor and worthless things are the best of these outward blessings in comparison of the inestimable Gift of his own Son? Having given you him, can he deny you such a portion of these things as is necessary for your support? In the Apostle's judgment, 'tis impossible. *He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* Rom. 8. 32.

6. Consider for the encouraging and strengthening of your dependence on God's Providence, how easy it is for him to help you in a time of need, and to supply all your wants.

(1.) His Wisdom and Power are infinite : Surely Infinite Wisdom can contrive how to help you , and Infinite Power can put in execution, and effect what Infinite Wisdom hath contrived for your good.

(2.) All the Riches and Furniture of the World is his , and perfectly at his disposal. *The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof*, Psal. 24. 1. *The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts*, Hag. 2. 8.

(3.) He hath the hearts of all men, even of Kings in his hand, *as the rivers of water ; he turneth them whithersoever he will*, Prov. 21. 1. He moulds and frames the hearts of men ; he inclines and disposeth them to do good to whom he pleaseth.

7. The Efficacy of his Blessing upon a little, should also encourage and strengthen our dependence on His Providence. If God think fit to give but a little , yet a little with his Blessing goes a great way. We may observe how healthful , strong, and vigorous , and how fit and able to undergo the Labours of their Callings and Employments , many poor people are through the Blessing of God upon that very slender portion which God's Providence hath allotted them. In respect of this singular and efficacious blessing of God upon a little where he gives but a little : I say, in respect of this his singular Blessing,

sing, as in other respects, it is, that the Psalmist saith, *A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked,* Psal. 37. 16. So then, though your portion may be small, and your allowance short, yet that short allowance through God's Blessing may serve your turn, and you may do as well with it, as if your Table were richly furnished with all the Delicates that Sea and Land can afford. 'Tis not a great deal that our Nature stands in need of, nor that can sustain Life without God's Blessing, and with his Blessing a little shall suffice. *A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth,* Luke 12. 15.

Here you will say, perhaps; I find that I could live upon a little, if I were sure that I should always have a little; but when that little which I have, is gone, as it will quickly be, How shall I then live? What shall I do for more? But do you still move this Question after all that hath been said concerning the Providence of God? To what end have I all this while been laying before you Considerations and Arguments to encourage and strengthen your dependence on God, if all that hath been said will not cure your distrust of God's Providence? You say, What shall I do for more when that little which I have is gone? What have you else to do but to cast your self upon God's Providence? He who gave  
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you that little which now you have left, can supply you with more when that is gone and he will do it, if you depend on him. Your case is much like that of the Widow of *Zarephath*, who was in a time of Famine reduced to so low a condition, that she had nothing remaining but an handful of Meal in a Barrel, and a little Oil in a Cruse; and when that was spent, she made account that she and her Son must Dye for want: But God provided better for her, by sending the Prophet *Elijah* to her, who assured her, that *the barrel of meal should not waste, neither the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord would send rain upon the earth*, 1 Kings 17. 14. 'Tis true, the way of Her supplies was miraculous, and you may not expect that your succours should come in to you in such a manner; But God's Wisdom and Power are never at a loss: He can supply your wants a hundred other ways, and never go beside the course of his ordinary Providence: Wherefore take heed how you dishonour him, and wrong your self by your unbelief.

If your straits be very great, and still like to be greater, so as your Faith is much shaken, and your dependence on God weakened; Consider these Three things.

1. That your condition is not singular: God herein deals no otherwise with you



than he hath often dealt with his own Children : It hath frequently been the Lot of those that have been dear unto God. This was sometimes the condition of the Apostle St. Paul, and other Christians together with him ; *Even to this present time, saith he, we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place, 1 Cor. 4. 11.* And what may we think of those eminent Believers, whose condition the Apostle represents, Heb. 11. 37, 38. ? *They wandred about, saith he, in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy ; they wandred in deserts and in mountains, and in dens, and caves of the earth.* Were not these holy Men brought into greater straits than you were ever acquainted with ? And yet there is a greater instance than any of these ; The Condition of our Blessed Lord and Saviour, the Lord of Glory, and the Heir of all things, was low and strait, as to outward things : *The foxes have holes, saith he, and the birds of the air have nests ; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head, Matth. 8. 20.* And as for other necessary supplies, he had them not of his own, but received them from others, whose Love, Zeal, and Piety moved them to Minister to him of their substance ; as we read, *Luk. 8. 3.*

2. God often defers to supply the wants  
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of his people till they are brought into great straits, that his care of them, and his Gracious Providence may then more eminently be seen, and appear in those seasonable reliefs and succours which he then affords them. It was so in the case of the Widow of *Zarephath* before mentioned: Her Condition was at that low Ebb, that she had but one Meal's sustenance left her, and when that was spent, she knew not whither to go for another Meal's Meat. When God had brought her to this extremity, then comes in her relief in an extraordinary way, as it were immediately from Heaven. *God waits to be gracious*, *Isai. 30. 18.* He waits for that season of shewing mercy, that may render his mercy most remarkable: Man's necessity is God's opportunity.

3. That the greater our Necessities are, the more tender and compassionate is God towards us; and the more do his Bowels dispose him to shew mercy. *As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him*, *Psal. 103. 13.* Now we know Parents, though they always love their Children, yet they never shew greater love, and pity them more, than in their greatest distresses.

Thus we have seen how many grounds of encouragement we have to depend on God in all our straits for the supply of our wants.

But to the end we may the better depend on God's Providence, and that nothing from within us discourage or weaken our dependence on him, for *finding grace to help in time of need*: Let us

1. Be humbled for all our sins whereby we have any way brought our selves into straits, or contributed thereunto. What those sins are, every man's own guilty Conscience will help to inform him: For Afflictions will bring our sins to remembrance; in an evil day our hearts will smite us, and our Consciences will check us, and set our sins in order before us: Some of our sins, to be sure, will at such a time come to our Thoughts, and fly in our Faces: Let us upon that occasion search out the rest, and having found them, be soundly humbled for them all, and judge our selves most worthy to suffer whatsoever is already come upon us, and whatsoever we have cause to fear may be yet further coming on us: And let us earnestly implore God's Mercy for the pardon of them. Till this be done, and be done effectually, our dependence on God's Providence will be damp'd and discouraged; will be much weakened and enfeebled. A Conscience loaded with guilt will be ready to tell a Man, That 'tis not for such a one as he is, and hath been, to expect help from God in time of need; he may rather expect to

be for his sins forsaken in his necessities, and to be suffered to perish for want. But when once a man hath been soundly humbled for his sins, he will be able to cast himself upon God's Providence, and to depend on him for the supply of his wants, though he have deserved the contrary. The sins which a Man hath been effectually humbled for, and sincerely repented of, will not hinder or weaken his reliance on God for seasonable reliefs in his distresses.

2. Be careful to walk with God, for the future to endeavour to please him, and to approve your heart to him in all things. This will beget in a man an humble confidence in God's mercy, and a quiet expectation of seasonable relief from him in all our exigences; for who may warrantably expect it, if not they whose great and constant care it is to do the things that please him? To such as these are the promises made, as we have seen before. *Fear the Lord ye his Saints; for there is no want to them that fear him. The young Lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they that fear the Lord shall not want any good thing, Psal. 34. 9, 10. The Lord God is a sun and a shield; the Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly, Psal. 84. 11. He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly, bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure, Isai. 33. 15, 16.*

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3. Be diligent and industrious in your Place and particular Calling : To this also are special Promises made : *The hand of the diligent shall bear rule ; but the slothful shall be under tribute , Prov. 12. 24. He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand ; but the hand of the diligent maketh rich , Prov. 10. 4. The Soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing ; but the Soul of the diligent shall be made fat , Prov. 13. 4. The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness , Prov. 21. 5.* But the issue of idleness is want and poverty. *How long wilt thou sleep , O sluggard ? When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep ? Yet a little sleep , yet a little slumber , yet a little folding of the hands to sleep : so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth , and thy want as an armed man , Prov. 6. 9, 10, 11.*

4. Trust in God, and stay your self upon his Promises. *Trust in the Lord and do good ; so shalt thou dwell in the land , and verily thou shalt be fed , Psal. 37. 3. He that putteth his trust in the Lord shall be made fat , Prov. 28. 25. He that putteth his trust in me shall inherit the land , Isai. 57. 13.* That is, God will provide for him , and sustain him.

5. Thankfully acknowledge God's Providence in all your supplies : By what instruments soever your succours come in, take notice of God's hand therein , and let him have the homage of your praises: Your eying  
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of his Providence, and your thankfulness to him for whatsoever you receive, and by what hand soever it may be conveyed to you, is the way to obtain more Mercies from him. For he delights in doing good to those who take notice of what is done for them, and are truly thankful to him for it.

6. Be contented with what God thinks fit to give, be it more or less. If your Portion be slender, murmur not, repine not at it: Prescribe not to God in what measure he should supply you: How little soever it be that you receive from him, there is all the reason in the world that you should be contented, and rest satisfied with it.

For, 1. 'Tis not so little, but 'tis more than you have deserved; you have no right to any thing; you can challenge nothing at his hands.

2. All these outward things are his own, *Matth. 20. 15.* And therefore he may do with them as he pleaseth; he may withhold them or give them as he sees good; and if he give them, he may apportion them to every man, and measure them out as to him seemeth best.

3. Though your portion be very small, yet 'tis that which God hath judged meetest for you. If he had judged a larger allowance meetest for you, and more conducing  
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to your good, you should have been sure to have had it. In a word ; They that have learned to be contented with a little, are both the more fit, and the more likely to be intrusted with more.

1. They are fitter to be intrusted with more ; for he that cannot be contented with a little, will not be contented with a great deal, the same evil disease still continuing with him in every condition.

2. They are also more likely to be intrusted with more ; for neither God nor men are so ready to gratify them that are of a craving, discontented, and unthankful-disposition, as to do good to those whose temper it is to be contented with, and thankful for whatsoever is bestowed upon them, be it never so little.

And so at length I have done with that first point, That in all our straits we must depend on the Providence of God for the supply of our wants.

I come now to the second point, which was, That our dependence on God's Providence is a good help to keep us from the use of unlawful means for relieving our selves in our distresses. This our Saviour's Reply to Satan's temptation may teach us : He was tempted to use unlawful means for supplying his present wants : For to have

have wrought a Miracle at the Devil's motion and instigation, had been unlawful, as hath been formerly shewed. Now how doth our Saviour fortify himself against this temptation, but by relying on the Providence of God for his sustenance?

*Man*, saith he, *liveth not by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.* Which is as much as if he had said; Satan, Thou temptest me to turn stones into bread for my present sustenance; as if there was no remedy, but perish I must for want, unless I can have bread. But the Providence on which I rely for my subsistence can keep me alive, and sustain me many other ways without bread. Whatever it be that God shall Appoint and Command to sustain me, that shall do it as well as bread. This is the scope of Christ's Reply; and hereby Christ hath informed and directed us what we should oppose against the like temptations.

Well then; Doth either Satan suggest to you, or your evil and unbelieving heart prompt you to make use of any unwarrantable means to help your self in your straits? Remember what our Saviour did in the like case, and cast your self upon the Providence of God, as he did. God is able to supply your wants a thousand ways without your sin; and he will provide for you, if you look up to him, and trust in him.

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Here I might give many Instances of unlawful expedients and sinful practices, which men are tempted to make use of, and which very many do betake themselves unto, and make use of ; and this in great part from a distrust of God's Providence. Though this be not the only thing that puts them upon those unjustifiable courses, yet 'tis one of the chief things that makes them warp from the rule, and turn aside into crooked ways to provide for themselves and such as have dependence on them. Some Instances of these unlawful means, are Lying and Equivocation in the way of Commerce and Trading ; false Swearing, unjust Weights and Measures ; concealing the faults of your Wares ; mingling and adulterating Wares ; blending the good and bad together, and then selling them for the best, and for pure and unmixed ; setting unreasonable rates upon Commodities, your abusing the Ignorance of those with whom you deal, and taking advantage of their unskilfulness to impose upon them, and cheat them : And in a word, your not observing our Saviour's Rule, that requires you to deal with others, as you desire to be dealt with your self. All these unlawful Practices mostly proceed from mens distrust of God's Providence ; a sound belief of God's Gracious Providence, and a firm reliance on it, would strengthen men  
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against whatsoever temptations might assault them, to make them betake themselves to those unjustifiable shifts and unworthy artifices that promise greater advantages than ever men will attain by them; for a Curse will in the end appear to be entailed upon whatsoever is so acquir'd.

*Obj.* 1. But you will say, I have a great Charge upon me; I have a large Family; and therefore it concerns me to make the best shift I can to provide for so many that have dependence on me.

*Ans.* 1. If your Families be great, the greater cause have you to be careful to keep you in those lawful ways in which you may expect the blessing of God upon your self and yours; and so doing, to cast your self and those that are related to you, upon the Providence of God. Can you think that to be a likely or probable way to provide for your Family, by which you provoke God, and draw down the effects of his displeasure upon your self and your Family?

2. God considers both the quantity of your Family, and their wants; their number and their necessities; and will accordingly provide for them all, unless by your distrust and unbelief, or by your neglect to serve his Providence in the use of lawful

ful means, you stand in your own light, and give him just cause to forsake you in your extremities.

3. Are there not many others whose Families are as numerous as yours, who yet were never so distrustful of God's Providence, as to reach forth their hands to make use of any unlawful means for helping themselves, and supplying their wants? And whoever saw a Family, or any belonging to it, miscarry for want, if they were frugal, industrious, careful to keep in God's way, and to cast themselves upon his Providence?

4. How many large and numerous Families have been well maintained, and decently brought up, by so little, through the blessing of God upon it, as hath been to the admiration of all that have observed it?

*Obj.* 2. But you will say, That liberty which I take, and some of those expedients which I endeavour to help my self by, and which you condemn as unlawful, are no other than such as are commonly made use of by many, without the least scruple. If they were unwarrantable, I cannot think they would be so generally received and taken up as they are. Why may it not be lawful for me to do as almost every body doth, especially considering the condition in which I am?

*Ans.*



*Ans.* 1. 'Tis not the Practice of others, but the Rule that you are to heed, and and to order your Conversation by.

2. The commonest of things unlawful, doth not alter the nature of them; neither doth it render them less, but more dangerous to them that practice them. Common Sins are usually the forerunners of Common Judgments; in which Judgments, whoever else escape, they will be sure to have their share, at least they have all reason to expect it, that have been partakers with others in such sins. We have no security from Common Judgments, but by keeping our selves free from the Contagion of those Common Sins that procure them.

3. Whereas you add, That if there were such evil in those practices, they would not be so generally taken up. Do we not know, that the depraved and sinful nature of Mankind disposeth Men to agree, comply with, and imitate one another in what is evil? Good examples are not so attractive, nor so sutable to Mens natural inclinations as to be readily followed; but as soon as any man sets an evil pattern, he shall have followers enough that will Write after the Copy that hath been laid before them. Any new gainful device or practice, how unjustifiable soever, will quickly be embraced. If but one man

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begin it, he will not long want Company: Many others will fall in, and follow, as being glad that there was any that would break the Ice, and go before them, to give some Countenance to an unwarrantable Practice, and to be something of a Plea for the justification of it.

4. The Commonness of sin, blinds the eyes of men, and misrepresents sin to them, making great sins appear small, and making small sins to seem to be no sins at all. The practice of the Multitude is a deceitful rule to take the measure of sin by; the multitude may mislead you, and draw you aside out of the right way; else the Caution *Exod. 23. 2.* of not *following a multitude to do evil*, had been needless.

*Obj. 3.* But you will say, Many things which, perhaps, a man of strict and severe Principles, and a stander-by, may judge to be unlawful, are now so interwoven with all manner of Trades, and so mingled with them, as they cannot be severed from them. Either a man must not Trade at all, or he must make use of them; for there is no living in any way of Trade without them: They are now by long and almost universal practice so incorporated into Trade, as that they are upon the matter become essential to it.

*Ans.* 1. This is only affirmed, but not proved. There is nothing that is evil in it self, but may be separated from any lawful Employment or Calling. If there be any Trade or Employment unto which any evil is inseparably annexed, and which is utterly incapable of being managed without such a sinful practice, that Trade or Employment, whatsoever it be, is even for that very reason unlawful, and to be laid aside as that which God doth not approve of, nor allow any man to exercise himself therein. All Lawful Employments are mens Vocations or Callings, as we usually term them, and that according to the Scripture, which so speaks of them. So 1 Cor. 7. 20. *Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called*; that is, let him continue in the same Trade or Employment wherein he exercised himself before his Conversion from Heathenism to Christianity. Now every man's Trade or Employment is termed his Calling, because 'tis that business which God calls him unto. Whence we may conclude, That if there be any Employment unto which any sin is intrinsic, or which cannot be managed without some sinful Practice or unlawful Artifice, that Employment is not of God's Appointment; for he never calls any man to engage himself in an Employment which no man can carry on without sin.

2. But the truth is, 'tis a meer pretence for any man to say that such and such practices, though otherwise not so agreeable to right and strict Principles, are now become inseparable from Trading, and there is no carrying on a Trade without them. In plain English, men cannot gain so much without them as they desire; they cannot dismiss and abandon them, but they must withal be content to abandon and forego some part of their profit, which they are unwilling to do. But herein they make it appear, That they either understand not aright, or consult not their own Interest.

For, 1. If it should so be that some part of their profit would by this means be cut off; Is not a little well and honestly gotten, better than a great deal gotten by undue Artifices? Hath not a man more true comfort in a little, and is there not a greater blessing upon a little well gotten?

2. God can also in an ordinary way of Providence so dispose of things, as a man shall get more by quitting and casting off all unlawful methods of gain, than ever he got by them. For the more fairly and honestly any man deals, and the more strictly conscientious and exactly just he is in the whole managing of his Trade, the more Custom he is like to have, the more willingly will men deal with him,  
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and the rather will they trust him, and repose confidence in him.

As for distrust of God's Providence, there are two things which set forth the evil and danger of it ; the Consideration whereof should make us careful to strive against it, and to endeavour the subduing of it, and the rooting it out of our hearts.

1. The evil and great sinfulness of our distrust of God's Providence, may appear from the view of those many helps that God hath afforded us, for encouraging and strengthening our dependence on his Providence. I have before largely insisted on them, so as I shall not here need to mention them again. To distrust God's Providence after all that he hath said and done to induce us to trust in him and depend on him, is no small aggravation of our sin.

2. Distrust of God's Providence makes way for many other sins, and lays us open to many temptations. Whither will not he run for help, that expects none from God ? What execrable Wickedness may not the Devil hurry him into, upon the pretence of putting him upon expedients for relieving himself ?

And this may suffice to have been spoken touching the Devil's first temptation, and Christ's Reply thereunto.

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I now go on to speak of the second temptation, as it is set down in the 5th, 6th, and 7th Verses. *Then the Devil taketh him up into the holy City, and setteth him on a Pinnacle of the Temple ; and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thy self down : for it is written , He shall give his Angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.*

In which words we have again Satan's Temptation, and Christ's Reply to it. In his temptation we may observe the time, then the things preparatory to it, and making way for it. *The Devil taketh him up into the holy City and setteth him on a Pinnacle of the Temple ; the temptation it self, If thou be the Son of God , cast thy self down : And the Reason or Argument by which he enforceth the Temptation , For it is written , He shall give his Angels charge concerning thee , and in their hands they shall bear thee up , lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Of these in order : The first thing to be spoken of, is the Time when Satan thus assaulted our Saviour ; then ; that is , immediately after that he had been foyled and worsted in his former temptations. No sooner had one of his temptations*

ptations been answered, but he comes on with another; wherein we may see the restless and unwearied malice of Satan, who though he be beaten, yet reneweth his assaults, and makes further experiments upon the tempted, as hoping, that though one temptation took not effect, yet another might.

But here it may be Objected, That St. James saith, *If we resist the Devil, he will flee from us*, Jam. 4. 7.

I Answer, That we may not expect that he should presently flee from us, as soon as we begin to make resistance; but if we still continue to resist him, we shall at length not fail to put him to flight. How long we may be put to maintain the fight against him before he flee, none can certainly determine; but that flee he shall at length, unless we cowardly yield to him, we may confidently expect: And that he doth not betake himself to flight sooner, is oftentimes because he sees we resist him in such a faint and cowardly manner, as encourageth him to come on again with hopes of prevailing.

Now the unwearied and restless malice of our spiritual Enemy, should teach us to be ever watchful, and never to think ourselves free from danger of being assaulted. And this continual watchfulness is so much the more necessary, because there is no-

thing that more lays us open, and exposeth us to the malicious attempts of the Enemy against us, than our Carnal security.

For, 1. This invites Satan to assault us: If he at any time observe that we are asleep, that we are in a careless and secure posture, not minding our danger; that's the Tempter's opportunity; that's the proper season in which, if ever, he may hope to prevail.

2. This also renders us weak and unable to resist him: His temptations then surprise us, and find us wholly at a loss, and unprepared to withstand an Enemy that rusheth in upon us. The spiritual Arms which we should be always accouter'd with, are then put off and laid aside; and we cannot on a sudden get them on. In these respects it highly concerns us as we tender the safety of our Souls, to be ever standing upon our guard, and to beware that we suffer not carnal security to creep on upon us. There are some certain times when we are most subject to be over-taken with carnal security, and to make account that we are in little or no danger from the Enemy of Souls. Some of these times are,

(1.) When we have lately been assaulted with temptations, and quitted our selves well:

well : When we have lately made our part good against Satan , and repelled his fiery Darts , then we are apt to fancy our selves out of danger. But though Satan had been victoriously resisted by our Saviour in one temptation, yet this malicious and restless Adversary presently takes up another fiery Dart , and casts it at him. You have stoutly resisted Satan , and he hath not prevailed against you ; this is well , but however be not secure ; your Saviour's case may be yours ; the Enemy, though worsted in one temptation, may presently fall on again , and assault you with another.

(2.) Another time when we are apt to grow secure , and insensible of our danger from Satan, is, when Satan hath been for some considerable space of time chained up and restrained ; or when he hath found Employment elsewhere, so as we have not been molested with those temptations with which some time formerly we have been upon all occasions pestered ; when we have been so long free from temptations, we too easily persuade our selves that we shall now be never any more troubled with them. But let us take heed how we entertain such a fond dream : You must remember,

(1.) That the Devil is still the same that he

he was heretofore when he more frequently assaulted you ; as full of malice and rage against you as ever. And,

(2.) If it be so that God for a time hath restrained him , you know not how soon he may again set him at liberty , and let him loose upon you : You know not but that he may already have obtained leave to tempt you : Or,

(3.) If being at liberty he hath all this while forbore to assault you, perhaps 'tis only to let you alone , and not to disturb you till you are fast asleep : Or it may be all this his forbearance of you is only that he may wait for a fitter opportunity to set upon you, where and when he may have greater advantage against you.

(4) 'Tis possible that herein you may be under a great and dangerous mistake. What if he hath been tempting you all this while that you have apprehended your self free from his temptations ? Such a thing may be , and often is : You are not assaulted with those his temptations with which he heretofore perpetually followed you, and disquieted you, and therefore you think Satan hath left you ; but may he not be still at work with you other ways , and so much the more dangerously , because you discern not his temptations ? Satan hath variety of devices and methods in his temptations. He can shift the scene, and  
bring



bring forth new temptations in another dress. He is the great Master of the Art of tempting, and is perfectly acquainted with all imaginable stratagems by which Souls may be subverted and eternally ruined.

However it be, give not way to a secure and supine frame of Spirit. How long soever you may have been freed from those temptations which were wont to create almost continual trouble unto you, never think your self out of danger as long as you have so subtil, malicious, and restless an Enemy as the Devil is. Be always expecting new assaults from him, and be ever in a readiness to encounter with him.

But look especially that you be prepared to resist him where he is most likely to set upon you; that is, where you are weakest, and where you have been most frequently worsted by him: There be sure that you be ever armed with all that strength of holy resolution against this, that you can possibly attain to; and let your resolutions be backt with whatever Scriptures or Arguments you can find out and get together, that may add any force to them. Firmness and Strength of resolution against sin, is a great thing to fortify us against temptations. Where this is, all Satan's fiery Darts rebound and fall back upon him. But our  
weak,

weak, imperfect, and unsteddy resolutions, are but half-resolutions, that presently yield to the force of temptation, and stand the weak tempted Soul in no stead at all. A thread of Tow is not more easily broken where it toucheth the fire, than these resolutions are when the stress of temptation makes tryal of them. Now he that would get strong and stedfast resolutions against any sin that he hath been often tempted unto, and often overcome by those temptations, must labour to be thoroughly convinced of these two things; namely, that the thing is really a sin; And that sin is the greatest evil in the world.

1. He must labour to be thoroughly convinced, That the thing against which he would get firm and stedfast resolutions, is really a sin. There are many sins, yea, some great and heinous sins which many men will hardly yield to be any sins at all; or if they think they may be sins, yet they have not a clear sight and full conviction of the sinfulness of them. If sometimes they judge them to be sins, yet at other times they doubt, and call in question the evil of them, and especially in the hour of temptation their minds are so darkened, and there is such a mist cast before their eyes, that they can scarce discern any evil in them. As long as 'tis thus with them,  
how

how is it possible that they should take up any firm and stedfast resolutions against them? But let them once be clearly and thoroughly convinced of the evil and sinfulness of them, it will then be more easy to bring the heart to take up peremptory and absolute resolutions against them.

2. The other requisite thereunto, is, That a man be also as fully convinced of the great evil of sin, that it is the greatest evil in the world; that all other evils, even the greatest and most formidable evils, are nothing in comparison of the evil of sin, which carries in it a direct opposition and contrariety to the Holy Law and Nature of God; that casts a man out of God's favour; that shuts him out of Heaven, and exposeth him to all the dreadful effects of God's Wrath in Hell for ever. Let a man be thoroughly, effectually, and clearly convinced of these two things, that such and such things are really sins, and that sin is the greatest evil in the World, more to be dreaded and shunned than whatever else is most formidable to our Nature, and which our Nature most abhors and runs away from; I say, Let a man have these two Convictions, and then what should hinder him, but that he absolutely and firmly resolve against those sins; but that he resolve against them with that firmness,  
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stedfastness, and peremptoriness of resolution, that nothing in all the world shall ever prevail with him to go against his resolutions: Neither promises, nor threatenings, nor hopes, nor fears, nor any thing else that can be named.

So from the time, *then*, I come to speak of what was done by the Devil by way of preparation, and to make way for this second temptation: *The Devil took him up into the Holy City, and set him on a Pinnacle of the Temple.* By the *Holy City* we are to understand *Jerusalem*, which is so called also, *Matt. 27. 53.* where we read, that after the Resurrection of Christ, many Bodies of Saints which slept, arose, and came out of the Graves, and went into the Holy City. Now *Jerusalem* is stiled *the Holy City*.

1. In respect of the special Presence of God in that City, in which, as he himself speaks, he was pleased to dwell, and as it were to make it the place of his residence!

2. 'Tis stiled the *Holy City* in regard of the Holy Ordinances and Worship of God which were there set up and established. And this stile of *the Holy City* it still retained as long as God was pleased to vouchsafe the continuance of his Gracious Presence, Ordinances, and Worship among them,

them, though the people generally were wofully corrupt, and had most sadly degenerated from the Piety of their Ancestors. How miserably corrupt that People and Church were in our Saviour's time, sufficiently appears from those many woes denounced against the chief of them, *Matt. 23.* and yet still *Jerusalem* hath the style of *the Holy City*; God had not yet cast them off; he had not called them *Loammi*; *Hos. 1. 9.* he had not disowned them for his People. And certainly as long as God owns a People for his, so long should we own them as such; as long as he is pleased to vouchsafe his own Gracious Presence among them, so long should not we renounce them, nor withdraw from them. Though their spots and corruptions be great and foul, yet if he be pleased to bear with them, who is infinite in purity and holiness; I mean so far to bear with them, as not upon that account to disclaim them, it much more becomes us to do it.

Again; If that Place and People be styled holy where God is pleased to vouchsafe his special Presence, and where he hath placed his Name, set up his Ordinances and Worship; this sheweth with what holy fear and reverence we ought to make our approaches unto God in the Assemblies of his People to Worship him.



The Consideration of God's special Presence in a place, should strike an holy awe into our hearts. We know the Presence of an Earthly Prince doth it; how much more should the Presence of the Great King of Heaven and Earth! Upon this account it is that the Psalmist saith, *God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about him, Psal. 89. 7.* And why in the Assembly of his Saints more especially, but because he is there pleased to vouchsafe his special Presence? We read, *Gen. 28.* how much *Jacob* was affected with the apprehension of the Presence of God, who had in a Dream graciously revealed himself unto him. When he awoke out of his Sleep with the Impressions of the Presence of God upon his heart, he said, *Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not.* And he was afraid, and said, *How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.* Were we all deeply affected with these awful apprehensions of God's Presence, when we assemble ourselves in his house, we would demean our selves with more holy Reverence and Devotion than many of us do. Our Tongues would not be Talking or Whispering, nor our Eyes gadding, while we should

should be wholly intent upon the Worship of God ; neither would we in our postures express less regard of the Presence of God, than we do of the presence of a mortal man that is but a little above us.

And so much may suffice to have been spoken upon occasion of *Jerusalem's* being styled the *Holy City*.

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## The Eleventh Sermon.

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### M A T T H. IV. 5.

*Then the Devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a Pinnacle of the Temple.*

**N**O W as for the Devil's taking Christ up into the Holy City, and setting him on a Pinnacle of the Temple : This may be understood divers ways.

1. Some conceive, That upon the Devil's Motion and Persuasion Christ, voluntarily went into *Jerusalem*, and placed himself on a Pinnacle of the Temple : But there is no probability that Christ should so far yield to the persuasions of the Devil. That wicked and malicious Spirit hath still some evil intention and mischievous design, even when he persuades a man to do that which is not evil in it self ; and therefore we may not comply with any motion that he makes, how harmless soever it may seem to be. But of this somewhat hath been spoken before.

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2. Others

2. Others conceive, That the Body of Christ was transported or carried by the Devil through the Air, and placed on a Pinnacle of the Temple; and this seems to be much more probable. This indeed could not be done without Christ's own permission as God; for if it had pleased him, he could by his Divine Power have hindered it. Now that Satan, God permitting it, can thus remove and transport the Bodies of men from one place to another, is a thing that cannot be questioned by any man that shall consider what power the Devil hath, and what hath frequently been done by him.

1. As for the Power of the Devil, the Psalmist saith concerning the Angels, that they excel in strength, *Psal.* 103. 20. And 'tis left upon record, *Isai.* 37. 36. that an Angel in one night slew One hundred fourscore and Five thousand men in the Camp of the *Assyrians*.

And if it should be here Objected, That the Psalmist speaks of good Angels, and that such a one was he that made that Slaughter in the *Assyrian* Army:

I Answer, That though the Angels that fell, have lost their Grace; yet it appears not that their natural strength hath been impaired by their Fall. However it be, to be sure the Devils have much greater power than to carry and convey the Body of a Man  
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from place to place. They who by God's permission can raise violent Tempests, overthrow Houses, pluck up strong Trees by the Roots, and the like, can with much more ease Transport the Bodies of Men through the Air.

2. The Reports of all Histories assure us, That such things have been often effected by the Devil : Wherefore unless we grant that he hath such power, we must deny the credit of all such Histories ; which were most irrational. But you will say, Though it be granted that the Devil is able to do it ; yet it seems very improbable that God should permit him thus to convey the Sacred Body of Christ from place to place. To this I Answer : That he was permitted to offer far greater indignities to his Immaculate Soul , by assaulting it with those vile and horrid temptations mentioned in the Text ; and therefore how much more might he be permitted to offer those less indignities to his Body ? Now from what hath been said , we may observe,

1. That the Devil hath a power over the Bodies of Men , even of good Men, so far as God permits him. He here took the Body of Christ , carried it into the Holy City , and set it on a Pinnacle of the Temple. The Text saith expressly, That the Devil took Christ, and set him on

a Pinnacle of the Temple ; 'tis not said that he went into the City , and set himself on a Pinnacle of the Temple. And as by God's permission he hath a power of carrying and transporting the Body from one place to another , and of disposing of it ; so he hath power to inflict grievous things on the Body, and of tormenting it. So *Luke* 13. 11. We read that a Woman , a Daughter of *Abraham* , had been possessed with a Spirit of Infirmity eighteen years, whom Satan had so bound , that she was bowed together , and could in no wise lift up her self. So the Woman of *Canaan's* Daughter was grievously vexed with a Devil , as she represented her Daughter's Condition to our Saviour, *Matt* 15. 21. So again, the Father that was a Suppliant unto Christ in behalf of his Son, saith, he had a Dumb Spirit , which was wont to tear him so as he foamed , and gnashed with his teeth , and pined away ; and that oft-times it had cast him into the fire , and into the waters , to destroy him, *Mark* 9. 17, 18, 22. By these and divers other instances in the Gospel , it is apparent what power the Devil hath over the Bodies of men , if through God's permission he be at liberty to make use of his power. Which may be further confirmed from that remarkable instance thereof in *Job* , whom Satan smote with sore Boils from the sole of

his Foot unto his Crown, *Job 2. 7.* And instances in several kinds of the power of the Devil over mens Bodies there have been in all Ages. This Observation I shall presently apply, when I shall have first spoken a few words to another Observation which the words afford us. The Devil had power to carry our Saviour into the Holy City, and to set him on a Pinnacle of the Temple; but he had no power to cast him down thence, which he would certainly have done after that Christ had refused to cast himself down, but that he who permitted him to set him on the Pinnacle of the Temple, did not permit him to cast him down thence.

Hence we may often observe in the  
2d. Place, That though the Devil hath great power over the bodies of men; yet his power is limited and restrained. He cannot touch any Man's Body until he hath obtained leave of God to do it; and then he can go no further than his Commission reacheth. So in *Job's* Case he obtained leave of God to afflict that holy Man's Body, but withal he had his bounds set him beyond which he must not go. *Behold he is in thy hand, said the Lord to him, but save his life, Job 2. 6.* He might smite him with sore Boils from the sole of his Foot unto his Crown; but he might not

kill him. Of the restraints that are upon the Devil, and the limits within which he is confined as to the Exercise of his Power, we have abundant proof in the Evangelists. There we find that the Devils could not as much as enter into the Swine but by our Saviour's permission, and upon leave first obtained of him, *Matt.* 8. 31. Much less can Satan take possession of men, or offer any violence to their Bodies without God's permission. And so likewise having obtained some power over mens Bodies, he cannot do as he listeth while he hath possession of them, or while they are as to some things in his power. So we read, *Luke* 4. 35. that though he could throw the possessed all along in the midst of the Company, yet he could not hurt him. So *Mark* 9. 18--24. though the Devil could most grievously handle the man's Son of whom he had gotten possession; though he could tear him, and make him foam, and gnash with his Teeth, and pine away; though he could oft-times cast him into the Fire, and into the Water, yet he could not destroy him. Some instances of like nature in our days there have been; the Devil hath strangely distorted and wrested the Bodies of some persons; he hath even bowed them double, and caused such grievous and frightful Convulsions in several parts of their Bodies, as have been to the admiration and amazement

ment of the Beholders ; and as a man might have thought it, impossible that their Bodies should ever have been set right again, and have recovered their due postures ; and yet could not the malicious and powerful Enemy of Mankind break one Bone , or dislocate one Joynt, or prejudice one Muscle , or Artery , or Sinew, or Ligament of the Body ; as hath afterwards appeared when the Devil hath been compelled to quit his possession. A thing to be admired, as in which the Power and Goodness of God in restraining the malice and power of the Devil doth eminently appear :

Add hereunto, That how long soever the Devil hath kept possession of any person, or how many Devils soever have possessed the same person, at the Command of Christ they instantly come out , and leave the Possessed. The man's Son, *Mark* 9. had been possessed by the Devil from a Child , *v.* 21. and yet at Christ's word he is enforced to quit his Habitation. When a whole Legion of Devils had gotten possession of one man , *Mark* 5. 9. they all come out of him at the Command of Christ. In a word ; Christ's power over the Devil to restrain them at his pleasure, and to fix limits to their power, the Scripture represents to us when it saith , that he hath the Key of Hell , *Rev.* 1. 18. and that



that he hath the Key of the Bottomless Pit, and a Chain in his hand with which he bound Satan, *Rev.* 20. 1, 2. And thus I have shewed, That though the Devil hath a great deal of power over the Bodies of Men, yet his power is limited and restrained. Now the uses of what hath been said, both touching Satan's great power over the Bodies of Men, and touching the restraint and limitation of that his power, are divers :

*Use 1.* This may teach us to acknowledge God, and to take notice of his hand in whatever power the Devil hath over the Bodies of Men. Doth he at any time possess them ? Doth he grievously afflict and torment them ? Doth he pull and tear, wrest and distort them ? Doth he bow them together, as he did the Woman, *Luke* 13. 11. ? Doth he bind them, as he did her for Eighteen years together ? Doth he deprive them of the use of their Limbs, or of their Speech ? Doth he attempt to hurry them upon dangers, to cast them into the Fire or the Water, as he did him whose Case is described, *Mark* 9. ? In all this power that Satan exerciseth over the Bodies of any, consider still that he doth no more than what God permits him to do ; and that unless he had first obtained leave of God, he could have done none of these

these things. Without God's permission he could not have medled with the Body; he could not have once touched or come near the Body which is so afflicted and tormented by him. Wherefore seeing the Devil could have no power over the Body without God's permission, in this sad Case these things are to be done.

1. You must endeavour to find out those sins by which you may have provoked God to give the Devil so much power to afflict and torment the Body. For 'tis very probable that God had been some way or other highly displeased; or else 'tis likely he would never have proceeded to this severity.

2. You must, having found out the sins that provoked God, be soundly humbled for them, and unfeignedly repent of them.

3. You must earnestly seek unto God both for the pardon of your sin, and for the removal of the affliction which hath been brought upon you for it. This being done, and done in a due manner, God will be most ready both to pardon the sin, and to take off the affliction. He without whose permission Satan could have done nothing, can as easily Chain him up and restrain him. One rebuke from his Mouth shall dispossess and drive him away; yea,  
more,

more, if he see good, he can shut him up in the bottomless Pit, and confine him to his Prison. And so much concerning that First Use.

*Use 2.* Hath the Devil such power over the Bodies of Men, when God is pleased to permit him to make use of it? And doth God sometimes permit him to make use of his power over the Bodies of good Men as well as of others?

Then, 1. Let none be vainly and proudly confident that their Faith is so strong as the Devil shall never have any power over them. This is a vain and groundless fancy of ignorant people, who are so far from having arrived at that strength of Faith which they glory in, that it may justly be questioned whether they have any Faith at all? Whoever they be, are they stronger than *Job*? Are they privileged above Christ himself? It would better become the strongest to acknowledge their own weakness, to mind seriously that of the Apostle, *Rom. II. 20.* *Be not high-minded, but fear;* to be ever jealous of themselves, and watchful over their hearts, words, and ways, lest they should at any time provoke God to give Satan leave to use this power against them.

2. Let none be utterly discouraged, much less despair of mercy, if so sad a thing should befall them, if God should permit the

the Devil to possess their Bodies , or to inflict grievous things on them. This is no distinguishing Mark or infallible Character of a reprobate. God hath no where in his Word declared that he hath no mercy for such as these : To say nothing of *Job* against whom Satan had a large Commission , What think we of that Daughter of *Abraham* before mentioned, whom Christ loosed after Satan had bound her Eighteen years ? What reason have we to question but that she was a good Woman, and one that did not only belong to the Election of Grace , but even then was actually in the State of Grace , while Satan exercised that power over her Body ?

*Use 3.* Hath Satan such power over the Bodies of Men ? Then let us with all thankfulness ever acknowledge the most gracious and powerful Providence of God, in that Satan is so much restrained, and that he is not at liberty to do that mischief in the World which his Malice would instigate him, and his great power enable him to do, unless God had him in a Chain, and did upon all occasions hold him in, and keep him within those bounds which he hath assigned him. If the Devil were at liberty , there would be in every Family most dismal instances of his Malice, Rage, and Fury against Mankind. You should

should see one so bowed down as he could not lift himself up. with the poor Woman, *Luke 13. 11.* another torn, distorted, and racked, till he foamed and gnashed with his Teeth, and pined away, as the person mentioned, *Matth. 9.* another in the Condition of him that is described, *Mark 5. 2, 3, 4, 5.* who had his dwelling among the Tombs, and no man could bind him, no not with Chains; who plucked asunder the Chains, and broke in pieces the Fetters that he had been bound with: Or, as those two possessed persons described, *Matth. 8. 28.* who coming out of the Tombs were so fierce that no man might pass by that way. Could the Devil use his great power as he pleased, such lamentable Spectacles would be before your eyes wheresoever you went; not only Families but whole Towns would be like *Bedlam*.

And then again, Were not this malicious and powerful Enemy restrained, he would enter into all your Cattel; yea, into the Cattel of a Thousand Hills, and hurry them all as he did the *Gaderen's* Swine, into the Sea, or violently drive them down some steep precipice. Nothing in your Houses or in your Closets should be safe; he would take one Child from the Breast, and set it on the top of the Steeple, as he set our Saviour on the *Pinacle of the Temple*:  
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He would take another out of the Bed, or the Cradle, and transport it through the Air, where you should never see it again: He would snatch another out of the Arms of the Nurse, and dash out the Brains of it against the next Tower: He would lay hold of all that you most value, and carry it away. And when he had so done, he would turn your House upsidedown, and Bury you in the ruins of it. To conclude, We can never be thankful enough either for the safeguard and protection of good Angels, and the benefit which we receive by their Ministration, or for the security we have against the power and malice of Evil Angels, through God's most Wise, Powerful, and Gracious Providence restraining them, and watching over us for good, and not for evil.

And this may suffice to have been spoken concerning what was Preparatory to the Second temptation, with which Satan assaulted our Saviour. Now follows the temptation it self, together with the enforcements thereof from Scripture. Having set Christ *on a Pinnacle of the Temple*, and thereby made way for the temptation, he saith unto him, *If thou be the Son of God, cast thy self down: for it is written, He shall give his Angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up,*

*up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.* Of these two, the Temptation, and the Enforcement thereof in order. And first of the temptation, *If thou be the Son of God, cast thy self down.* The scope and design of this temptation, is to raise in Christ a vain and presumptuous confidence of his Father's Protection, and care of his safety in the neglect of means for his own preservation; yea, though he should not only neglect the means conducing to his safety, but needlessly and presumptuously run upon those dangers, which without a Miracle would certainly prove his destruction. In the first temptation the Devil's design was to make Christ distrust his Father's Providence: In this Second temptation he endeavours to bring him to an unwarrantable dependence on his Providence: Seeing he could not work his pure and immaculate Soul to distrust, he will try whether he cannot work it to presumption. If he will not be drawn off from trusting in his Father's Providence, and relying on it, he will use his utmost skill to induce him to trust in it, and rely on it more than he should have done; that is to say, without sufficient warrant from the World. Thus we see how subtil and how dangerous an Enemy we have to do with.

I. One who will turn every stone whereby he may hope to further our ruin,

ruin, and leave no means unattempted, that may contribute any thing towards the subverting of our Souls.

2. One who can make use of all manner of disguises, and turn himself into all shapes to beguile and draw us into Sin. One who can make his advantages of our Gifts, as well as of our Corruptions, to undo us. What Circumspection and Watchfulness can be too great where such an Enemy is ever waiting to intrap us, and ever busily at work in contriving new Methods for compassing our destruction?

Again; Whereas the Devil here a Second time endeavours to move Christ to give a demonstration of his being the Son of God, by casting himself down without hurt from a *Pinacle of the Temple*, as before he had moved him to make proof thereof by turning stones into bread; We may observe the earnestness and importunity of Satan, in pressing the same thing with several Arguments. If one Argument prevail not, he hath another in a readiness to second it. If our Saviour will not prove himself to be the Son of God by turning stones into bread, then Satan will sollicit him to do it, by casting himself down from a *Pinacle of the Temple*: Not that the Devil desired a proof thereof for the satisfaction of himself or others; but that he might upon that pretence draw him

into sin on the one hand or on the other ; either into the sin of Distrust, or Presumption.

The Devil's earnestness and importunity in pressing and reinforcing his temptations, should make us as resolute and obstinate in resisting them : And this resolution and obstinacy we should the rather oppose against Satan's importunity , because the Devil never useth greater importunity in urging his temptations, than where he hath greatest hopes of prevailing, and where he foresees that if he can prevail, our fall will be most shameful and dangerous. Now where the danger of being overcome is so great, and the consequence of being overcome is so sad, What resolution or obstinacy in refusing to yield to temptation, can be too great ? If a man should urge you with never so much importunity to throw your self headlong over some steep precipice, or to drink a Cup of strong Poison ; if a man should make use of a hundred Arguments to persuade you thereunto, you would never yield to it ; here no man could press you with so much importunity , but you would be as resolute and obstinate in refusing it. And why then should not your resistance be much more resolute and obstinate when you are tempted to sin, where your compliance doth not only threaten the destruction of the Body, but  
of



of the Soul also, and not the Temporal, but the Eternal destruction thereof? Ah weak and foolish Creatures that we are, who are so yielding and pliable; so easily prevailed with, and overcome, where our concernments are highest, and our dangers greatest!

Again, in the next place observe,

That how much earnestness and importunity soever the Devil useth in pressing his temptations, he can only persuade us, he cannot compel us to comply with his motions and suggestions: Unless Christ's free and voluntary consent can be gained, he cannot make him either turn stones into bread, or cast himself down from a Pinnacle of the Temple, or fall down and worship him. The Devil may tempt us to sin, and tempt us over and over, and enforce his temptations by all such Arguments as he judgeth most likely to prevail; but he hath no power over our Wills to make us yield to his solicitations whether we will or no. He can only persuade, press, urge, and importune us to do what he would have us; but he can offer no force or violence to our Wills: After he hath done all that he can to draw us into sin, he can never hurt us without our own consent: We must voluntarily betray our own Souls, or we are safe enough for any power that



he hath over us. And hence we may learn these Two things :

1. How vain and empty a Plea it is for any man that hath sinned, to say, that it was Satan that drew him aside, and that it was through his temptations that he offended. This is such an excuse as God will never admit of when he comes to reckon with you for your sin. Had it not been for the wickedness of your own heart, and the sinful propension of your own Will to what is evil, Satan's temptations could never have prevailed over you. It was the free consent of your own depraved Will that made you a prey to the Devil. And therefore however Satan tempted you to sin ; yet seeing it was the free act of your own Will that made you guilty , you are the Sinner, and you must bear the punishment, though Satan also shall be punished for tempting you.

2. We may likewise hence learn , how much it concerns us to fortify our Will against temptations. A Thousand temptations, how fierce and violent soever, can never make any sinful impressions upon us unless we will. Keep up in your Will a constant, firm, and stedfast purpose against all sin, and you will be temptation-proof. Let the Devil empty his Quiver, and spend all his Arrows upon you, he shall

shall never be able to wound you, unless you wound your self, which is only done by the accession of your voluntary consent to his temptations. 'Tis the free act of your own Will that foils you, that undoeth and ruins you, and nothing else.

Lastly, Whereas the Devil saith to our Saviour, *If thou be the Son of God, cast thy self down*; in making use of the persuasion and confidence which he had of his interest in God as his Father, to induce him to cast himself down presumptuously from the Pinnacle of the Temple, as making account that his Father would secure him against taking any hurt by his fall; we may observe,

That 'tis one dangerous temptation of Satan, to make men presume upon the favour of God to them, beyond what they have any warrant for. Thus he often thrusts men on to run upon dangers without a call, and to hazard themselves rashly and unwarrantably, bearing them in hand that God will preserve them.

But of this more when I come to speak of Christ's Reply to this temptation; and therefore I here forbear to insist on it, or pursue it any further.

So from the temptation it self, I go on to speak of the enforcement of it from

Scripture ; *For it is written , He shall give his Angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.* Our Saviour had answered and repelled Satan's former temptation by Scripture ; which the Devil observing, he also makes use of Scripture in his second temptation. Hath Christ his *Scriptum est*, *It is Written* ? So hath the Devil ; *It is Written*, saith he also : Whence we may observe,

1. That the Devil is acquainted with the Scriptures, and can alledge them where he can do any mischief, or hath hopes of doing any by alledging them. Wherefore if the Devil doth acquaint himself with the Scriptures, to wield and manage them against us, it concerns us to be acquainted with them, to make use of them in our own defence.

2. We may observe, That Satan takes special notice of mens temper and disposition ; he observes which way they incline, what they affect, what they love or reverence, and what is most likely to take with them ; and accordingly he both frames and enforceth his temptations. If Christ be for Scripture, and if he lay so much stress upon that, he hath Scripture for him. Thus if men be given to Covetousness, and be carried away with an inordinate Love of the World ; or if they be of ambitious

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and aspiring minds ; or if they be addicted to sensual pleasures and delights, the Devil baits his hook accordingly, and ever finds out that to tempt them with, which is most sutable to their inclinations. But if they be of a more serious and religious temper, if they mind heavenly things, give themselves much to the reading of the Holy Scriptures, and make the Word of God the rule of their Life and Conversation ; then he hath religious temptations for them (give me leave without offence so to call them), then he injects many needless scruples into their minds, then he fills their minds with many causeless fears and perplexities about their spiritual Estate ; then he puzzles them with the allegation of Scriptures upon Scriptures to back and enforce his temptations.

This may Caution us not to be too forward to entertain whatsoever is recommended to us under the Notion of Religion and Piety, and for countenancing whereof the Holy Scriptures are produced. The Devil can transform himself into an Angel of Light, 2 Cor. 11. 14. And he hath taught his Instruments and Factors to do the same. Notorious Deceivers and Blasphemous Hereticks can urge Scriptures, and pretend to greater light, and higher degrees of sanctity than others have attained ; yea, they may pretend to a condition of absolute

perfection. Of this we have had too much experience amongst our selves, as also of the fickleness and instability of many in all places who have been drawn aside and seduced into dark and slippery ways by these deceitful Workers, as the Apostle calls such Agitators for the Devil, 2 Cor. 11. 13. It doth therefore concern us all to be well advised before we entertain Novelries in Matters of Religion, how much Piety soever the Broachers of them may make shew of. That great circumspection and wariness in this matter is necessary, the Apostle St. Paul gives us to understand, requiring us to *prove all things, but to hold fast that which is good*, 1. Theff. 5. 21. And St. John cautions us to the same purpose, saying, *Believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits whether they be of God: because many false Prophets are gone out into the world*, 1 Joh. 4. 1.

And as it concerns us to be careful that we do not too hastily entertain whatever comes recommended to us by the allegation of Scripture for the countenancing of it, when we converse with others; so likewise must we be as careful thereof when we converse with our selves, and have to do with our own hearts. In our retirements many things may come into our Minds, or be offered to our Thoughts and Meditations together with some Scripture for the confirmation of them, which yet we



we must not without any further deliberation or enquiry, presently receive for truths, and give them the same room in our hearts which we reserve for those things that come immediately from God. We must remember that the Devil can quote Scriptures to gain credence and belief, acceptance and reception to his own false and wicked suggestions. He can suggest things to your mind, and fute Scriptures to them in such a manner, as you may be apt to think that to be from the Spirit of Truth, which is from the Father of Lies. Wherefore here also take the Apostle's wholesome and safe Counsel, *Try the Spirits, whether they be of God.* Now for our help and direction in trying the Spirits, Let these things be observed,

i. Consider what the things are which are laid before you, to be assented to or done by you, to be the Objects of your belief, or the Matters of your practice. Consider whether they be agreeable to the Analogy of Faith, and the general Tenor of the Holy Scriptures, and to what the Word of God frequently holds forth: If they be not, if the things proposed to be believed or put in practice be such as cross the general course, the plain and constant Doctrine of the Holy Scriptures; then are you to conclude, that they cannot be of God, and therefore that they ought to have

no reception or entertainment with you, notwithstanding all that is alledged to gain credit to them.

2. Consider the Scriptures that are brought in to ingage you to believe or practice what is offered to you. And here,

1. Consider whether the Scriptures be not dark and difficult : Such Scriptures the Devil and his Instruments often make use of, because they can the more easily put what sense they please upon them. But whatever be the meaning of dark and difficult Scriptures, this we may take for a certain rule which cannot fail us, That they must not, they cannot be so understood or interpreted as to contradict the plain, frequent, and constant Doctrine of other Scriptures that are easy to be understood, and have no difficulty in them. So then, though perhaps the most learned man in the World cannot positively and certainly determine what the true meaning of those dark Scriptures is ; yet not only learned men, but all men that have but any ordinary acquaintance with the Scriptures, may certainly determine negatively what the meaning of them is not ; that is to say, that no such sense or meaning can be fastened on them, or intended by them, as is contrary to the sense of many other plain Scriptures.

2. If

2. If the Scriptures be plain and easy as they lie in the Text, consider whether they be not curtail'd and mutilated ; whether something be not left out or chang'd in the allegation of them. This trick the Devil made use of in alledging the Portion of Scripture here mentioned by which he enforceth his temptation , as we shall see afterwards. And this hath ever been the practice of Hereticks, an Art which they have learnt from the Devil.

3. If the Scriptures be both plain, and intirely alledged , consider whether they be not misunderstood or misapplied. Men that shall stretch their wits to wrest Scriptures , and wire-draw them , may find ways to make the plainest Scripture serve their own turn ; they may rack and torture them so long , till they make them speak what they would have them speak.

And so I come to consider that Portion of Scripture which Satan here alledgeth to persuade our Saviour to *cast himself down from the Pinnacle of the Temple. He shall give his Angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.* Which words we have in the 91 Psalm, the 11th and 12th Verses. I shall consider them first as alledged by the Devil, and then as they are in themselves without relation

to the use that Satan here makes of them. The words are a most excellent and comfortable promise concerning the preservation and safety of God's People, such as dwell in the secret place of the most High, as they are described, *v. 1*. This excellent promise made to safeguard and secure God's Children from danger, the Devil abuseth, to prevail with Christ to run upon his own destruction. Whence we may observe,

That there is no part of the Word of God so excellent and comfortable, but the Devil knows how to abuse it to the most horrid and prodigious ends and purposes. Thus when he hath to do with those who labour and are heavy laden with the burthen of their sins, and whose Souls are deeply affected with the sense of God's Wrath, and who are upon that account amazed and terrified, he so manageth the matter, that the most sweet and comfortable Promises, the most rich and soveraign Cordials that the Word of God affords, rather increase their perplexity, and heighten their terrors, than mitigate or allay their troubles. For the Devil tells them, These indeed are excellent things which God hath prepared for, and promised to his, and happy, thrice happy are all they to whom they belong. But as for you, this is your misery, that you have nothing

to do with them, you are for ever excluded from having any share in them. The irrecoverable loss of these excellent things will add to your everlasting torment, while you shall with unspeakable anguish still recount what others enjoy, and you might have enjoyed, but are now eternally deprived of : It had been much better for you that no such Gracious Promises had ever been made. Thus again the Devil makes use of those large, full, and comfortable declarations and discoveries which God hath in his Word made of his Merciful and Gracious disposition, of his Infinite Goodness, and tender Compassions towards truly humbled and penitent Sinners ; these Gracious declarations and discoveries, I say, the Devil makes use of to encourage wicked and ungodly men to go on still in their trespasses, presuming upon mercy at last when they have run out their race in sin, and can now sin no more, because they can live no longer.

So wretchedly and dreadfully doth the Devil abuse, and tempt men to abuse the most sacred and comfortable truths of God.

Now two things we may hence learn ; namely, To be very careful that we suffer not the Devil by the abuse of Scripture thus to impose upon us, and mislead us ; and that we our selves do not imitate this wicked



wicked practice of the Devil, and write after the Copy which he hath set us.

1. Let us be very careful that we suffer not the Devil by the abuse of Scripture to impose on us, and mislead us. *We are not ignorant of his devices*, saith the Apostle, 2 Cor. 2. 11. We know 'tis an ordinary practice of his, to abuse whatsoever is most sacred and excellent, and to make it serve his own turn, sometimes for drawing men into sin, and sometimes into error; and sometimes for troubling and disquieting them, and if it be possible, for driving them to despair.

Now as it concerns all men to be watchful, and to be ever jealous of themselves, and of Satan, lest he should be too hard for them, taking the Sword of the Spirit out of their hands, and wounding them with the same weapon that should defend them; so are some persons more especially concerned to be watchful above others.

1. Such as highly prize and value the Scriptures, have a great esteem of them, and reverence for them. When the Devil hath to do with these; the Word of God, the Sword of the Spirit is with him, as the Sword of *Goliath*, there is none like it; because he knows there is no weapon which he is likely to wield more successfully than this. The persons with whom he deals, have that esteem and reverence for  
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the Scriptures, that nothing more easily prevails with them than what is backed with the Authority of them.

2. They also are more especially concern'd above others to be watchful that Satan mislead them not by the abuse of Scripture, who though they have good affections, and love the word, yet have but weak Parts, little Knowledge, and small acquaintance with the Scriptures. These in respect of their love to, and their esteem of the Word, are very ready to listen to any thing that seems to have the Authority of Scripture to countenance it; but being weak, little acquainted with the Scriptures, and unable to judge what is the true sense of Scripture, and what is not, may easily be misled and deceived; which Satan knowing very well, he makes choice of this weapon to set upon and assault them.

3. They are concerned to be watchful above others, that Satan mislead them not by the abuse of Scripture, who are puffed up with an high conceit of their own knowledge in spiritual things, and of their more than ordinary acquaintance with the Scriptures. These men are not the persons they conceit themselves to be. The greater their Opinion is of their own knowledge, the less sound knowledge have they attained. This proud Conceit

ceit of a man's own Knowledge, is an Infallible sign of Ignorance. *If any think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know,* 1 Cor. 8. 2. Now the Devil sees that these men also are so much the more easily abused by Scripture, because they conceit their knowledge to be such as cannot easily be misled.

4. They are concerned to be watchful above others, that Satan impose not upon them by the abuse of Scripture, who naturally affect novelties in sacred things, and are upon all occasions catching at any thing that seems to be new in Matters of Religion. The Devil, who both knows the temper, and how to fute it, hath for these people old errors put in new dressees, and new interpretations, and new applications of Scripture to countenance them. These things he knows will be acceptable to the affecters of novelty, and will smoothly go down with them.

5. They are concerned above others to be watchful that Satan impose not on them by the abuse of Scriptures, who for the present walk in darkness and see no light; who call in question their spiritual Estate, and doubt of God's love to them; and especially if they be under horrors of Conscience, if they from the fearful looking for of Judgment, and fiery Indignation, cry  
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out with those, Isa. 33. 14. *Who shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who shall dwell with everlasting burnings?* These poor distressed Souls are ready to lay hold of all Scriptures that have matter of terror in them, and to apply them to themselves. 'Tis therefore a great advantage which the Devil hath against these disconsolate and dejected persons, that he cannot be more ready to offer any thing from Scripture misapplied, that may increase and aggravate their trouble, than they are to entertain it. Wherefore the greater their danger is of being abused by Satan's misinterpreting and misapplying Scriptures to the further puzzling, dejecting, and frightening of them, the more watchful ought they to be.

6. It concerns them also to be watchful above others, that Satan impose not upon them by the abuse of Scripture, who find themselves strongly inclined and bent to do any thing concerning the Lawfulness whereof they are not satisfied. These persons while they are yet consulting and deliberating what they should do, will be very glad of any slender encouragement from Scripture to do what they have a mind to do, which even invites the Devil to abuse them by offering any thing from Scripture, however wrested and misunderstood, that may carry any shew or colour

of an Argument to prove that to be lawful which they are willing, and earnestly desirous should so be. 'Tis no hard matter to find out some Scripture or other which shall serve the Devil's turn, to make a man believe that which he hath a mind to believe.

And this may suffice to have been spoken touching the first thing ; to wit, That we ought to be very careful that we suffer not the Devil by the abuse of the Holy Scriptures to impose on us, and mislead us

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## The Twelfth Sermon.

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### M A T T H. IV. 6.

*And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thy self down : for it is written, He shall give his Angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.*

II. **W**E must also be as careful that we our selves do not imitate this wicked practice of Satan, and write after the Copy which he hath set us. Now this may be done, and is frequently done several ways.

As, 1. When such as are in their own apprehension rejected of God, and hopeless of finding mercy with him, wrest, misunderstand, and misapply all Scriptures to the increasing of their own troubles, and to the confirming of themselves in that

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black and dismal opinion of their forlorn condition, which their dark spirits are possessed with. These distressed Souls will often complain, That they are even afraid to read the Holy Scriptures, or look into the Word, because almost every thing they there meet with, seems to be against them, and to speak terror to them. This is many times the case of those who are in a good and safe condition: But partly through the malice and subtilty of Satan, and partly through their own misapplying the Scripture, and their turning the edge of the Sword of the Spirit against themselves, they make the Word of God, which should stay up, comfort, and relieve their drooping Souls, a means of casting them down more, and of plunging them into greater troubles and perplexities.

It will here, I know, be said, They cannot help it; glad they would be if they could apprehend the Scripture to be for them, and not against them; but as their condition is, they can discern no such thing. But though thus it may be with many, yet there is sometimes a degree of perverseness and wilfulness in others. The afflicted and disconsolate Soul sometimes refuseth to be comforted, as the Psalmist complains, *Pf. 77. 2.* A man shuts his heart against those things that should minister relief unto him, and thrusts

thrusts away from himself those comforts that are offered. And so on the other hand, he industriously catcheth at, and gathers up whatsoever may add to his trouble, and widen the Wound that hath been made in his spirit: And he disputes and reasons against whatsoever is said to shew, That those Scriptures with which he terrifieth himself, are misunderstood, or misapplied; and he obstinately opposeth himself against whatsoever is brought to allay and mitigate his troubles. Let all troubled Spirits take heed of this practice by which they do the Devil's Work, and further his design against their own Souls.

But here I must be understood as speaking to those unto whom the Comforts of the Scriptures belong; that is, to those who are truly humbled for their sins, and are unfeignedly willing and desirous to forsake sin: To those who truly prize and value Christ above all things, and long for nothing more than to be upon good grounds, assured of their Interest in him: To these, and to these only I speak, and not to such as are only terrified and frightened with the sense of their guilt, as *Cain* and *Judas* were, but neither hate sin, nor love Christ the more. If I should tell these miserable people, that the terrors of the threatnings belong not to them, and that taking them to themselves, they mis-

apply them, I should grossly abuse and delude them, and take the ready course for hardening them in their sins, to their destruction. These must know, that the threatnings, the severest threatnings in the Word belong to them, and the terrors of them are their proper and peculiar portion, as long as they continue to be what at present they are.

2. They also are guilty of imitating this wicked practice of Satan, and Write after the Copy which he, in abusing and misapplying Scriptures hath set them, who being in a state of unbelief and impenitency, and going on still in their trespasses, apply to themselves the Gracious Promises that only belong to believing and penitent sinners. They are not a few in the visible Church, that put this cheat upon their own Souls, and after Satan's example, perniciously and fearfully abuse the Holy Scriptures to the ruin of their Souls, which if rightly understood, and if duly applied and made use of, are able to make them wise to Salvation. What have they to do with the Comforts of the Promises, who are out of Christ, in whom all the Promises are Yea, and Amen? 2 Cor. i. 20. What have they to do with Peace, who are engaged in open War and Rebellion against God, as all impenitent sinners, all wicked and ungodly men are? Whatsoever Peace or  
Comfort

Comfort these, by the misapplication of Promises, may speak to themselves, God speaks none to them. *There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God, Isai. 57. 21.*

3. They also imitate Satan, who plead the Scriptures for the justification of themselves in any sinful practice. Thus, for example, they who are not willing to come up in all things to the strictness of the Rule, but take liberty to allow themselves in some sins which they account small and inconsiderable, will for their excuse be ready to plead that of *Solomon*, Eccles. 7. 16. *Be not righteous over much.* As if his cautioning men against needless scrupulosity in things which may be done without sin, did warrant a man to allow himself in any thing, how small soever, that is really sinful. So they who indulge themselves in excess, will in justification of their intemperate abuse of the Creatures, plead the Counsel of *St. Paul* unto *Timothy*, 1 Tim. 5. 23. *Drink no longer water, but use a little wine.* But what is there in *St. Paul's* advice, to encourage or plead for excess in drinking, who only Counsels *Timothy* to use a little Wine, and that also, as he there adds, for his Stomach's sake, and for his often infirmities? The like abuse of Scripture, after Satan's example, are they chargeable with, who addicting themselves to Covetousness, to Oppression, unjust deal-



ing, and unwarrantable Artifices for improving their Estates, under a pretence of making provision for their Families and Relations, in justification of their unlawful practices, urge that of the Apostle, *1 Tim. 5. 8. If a man provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.* As if the Apostle thereby gave men encouragement to provide for their Families by rapine, violence, oppression, fraudulent and injurious dealing, and any how. This indeed were to be worse than many Infidels, who have not allowed themselves in practices so contrary to the very Light of Nature.

4. They also imitate Satan, who wrest and abuse Scripture for the maintaining of any false Doctrine, or unsound Opinion. And this generally all Hereticks and Erroneous persons do, there being no Tenet or Opinion so notoriously false, or prodigiously wicked, which the Abettors and Defenders thereof will not pretend to be grounded on Scripture. The *Arrians, Samosatenians, Eutychians, Sabellians, Macedonians, Photinians, Socinians*, and the whole Herd of all sorts of Hereticks, alledge Scriptures for what they hold, and pretend to make it the bottom and foundation of their belief, even in those things

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that are most contrary to the Scriptures rightly understood, and duly applied.

And so much concerning that Observation, That the Devil knows how to abuse the most Excellent and Comfortable Scriptures to the most horrid and prodigious ends and purposes. Now concerning his notorious abuse of the particular Scripture here by him cited, there remains only one thing more to be spoken to, which also I have pointed at before; and 'tis his false and fraudulent dealing, in taking only that part of the promise which he thought made for his purpose, and leaving out that which was against him. *Cast thy self down*, saith he, *for it is written, He shall give his Angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone*; whereas the intire promise, as we read it in the Psalm, runs thus: *He shall give his Angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways; they shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone*. So then those words, *They shall keep thee in all thy ways*, the Devil craftily and fraudulently left out; for he knew very well, that it was none of Christ's ways, to cast himself down headlong from a Pinnacle of the Temple. In so doing, he should have gone out of his way, and consequently he should also have

have deprived himself of the safeguard and protection of the Angels in that place promised. Hence we may learn Two things.

1. To beware how we take up pieces of Promises, running away with what pleases us, and serves our turn, and leaving out the rest. This is a dangerous thing, which may quickly hurry us on to do that which may prove our destruction.

2. It may teach us to beware how we take up any promise, without the condition of the promise. The safeguard of Angels is promised unto God's Children, but 'tis no longer to be expected or relied on than they keep themselves within the bounds of their duty. The Angels have a charge to keep them in all their ways, but not when they ramble and wander out of their way. That men have a care to be always found in the way of their duty, is the condition of that promise. If they take liberty to go astray, to range, and rove up and down at pleasure, turning aside into every By-path they meet with, they must know, they do it at their own peril; as for the Angels, they have no charge to attend them, or look after them in all their aberrations and extravagancies.

And thus I have done with the consideration of the promise as abused by the Devil.

vil. I come now to consider it as it lies in the Psalm, without relation to the use that Satan made of it.

Though God hath been pleased by many Gracious Promises to assure his Children of his care of them, and of his watching over them to safeguard and protect them; yet for the strengthening of their weak faith, and the more to encourage them to depend on him for protection, he hath also been graciously pleased to declare, that he imployes his Angels to take care of them, and preserve them. So in the place alledged, *He shall give his Angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways; in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.* And so Psalm 34. 7. *The Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.* Thus, Matth. 18. 10. Our Saviour speaking of God's care of the preservation of little ones, and the provision he hath made for their safety, saith, *Their Angels do always behold the face of my father which is in Heaven.* The Blessed Angels therefore are deputed to take care of them, and preserve them when they are in danger. All the Blessed Angels are Servants to the Most High GOD, sent forth and imployed by him for the good of his People, as there is occasion. Of this Ministration of the Angels for the Benefit of God's Church

Church and People, we have many instances both in the Old Testament, and in the New, which are so well known, that I need not mention them.

Now though in these later Ages of the Church, we have no such visible Apparitions of Angels, as in former times; yet that they do upon all occasions help and relieve, protect and safeguard Believers in their dangers and distresses, as powerfully as ever heretofore, though invisibly, cannot in the least be questioned; *for they are all ministering Spirits, sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of Salvation*; that's their Office and Employment, *Heb. i. 14.* Neither is their Ministration confined to any certain Times or Ages of the Church; as long as God hath a Church here, as long as there are those upon the Earth that shall be Heirs of Salvation, so long will the Ministration of Angels for their good continue. Hence it is that in the Book of the Revelations of *St. John*, which contains a Prophecy of the Future State of the Church to the end of the World, the Angels are, upon all occasions, brought in as the great Instruments, whose Ministration God is pleased to make use of for the good of his Church, and for the execution of his judgments upon the Enemies thereof.

But



But not any longer to insist on the Ministration of Angels for the Church, and against the Enemies thereof in the general; I return to speak of it as it relates to the preservation and safeguard of God's people, as 'tis promised in the place alledged out of the 91 Psalm. That God is pleased to imploy his Angels for the good of his people, and particularly for their preservation in times of danger, needs not any further proof, than what the Scriptures beforementioned afford us; and indeed if there were no other Scripture to confirm it, than that passage quoted out of the Psalm last mentioned, yet that alone were sufficient. Wherefore all that remains to be added, is only to Answer such Questions as may be moved, for the better understanding of that Scripture, and then to make application.

*Quest. 1.* To whom is this promise of the safeguard and protection of Angels made; and who are they that may take to themselves the Comfort of it?

*Ans.* It doth not belong to all men, whether good or bad, but only to such as are truly pious and sincerely godly. These are they which in the first Verse of the Psalm are described by their trust in God; *they dwell in the secret place of the most High*; that is, they make God their shelter and refuge;

refuge; He is their dwelling-place, where they may be safe from whatever evils may threaten them. This sense of the First Verse is more plainly expressed in the Second Verse; where the Psalmist speaking in his own person, saith, *I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress, in him will I trust.* And again, Verses 9, 10. *Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee.* And this is agreeable to the petition of the Psalmist, *Psal. 31. 2.* where by Prayer recommending himself to the Protection of God, he saith, *Be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me.* In short, to dwell in the secret place of the most High; to make the Lord our Habitation; to make him our Rock, and House of Defence, is nothing else but to trust in him, to rely on him, and upon all emergent dangers to have recourse to him for safety; as a man when any peril threatens him, betakes himself to his House, or his Castle, where he may be secured against what might befall him. In this sense, to dwell in the secret place of the most High, and to make the Lord his Habitation, or House of Defence, is the property and character of a godly man; and to such a one, to a person thus described, doth the promise of the protection of Angels belong. And thus is the promise restrained, *Psal.*

34. 7. *The Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.* Wicked men therefore, that have no fear of God before their eyes, have nothing to do with the Comforts of this promise. So again, in the place before-mentioned, *Heb. i. 14.* The Angels are said to be *ministring Spirits, sent forth to minister for those that shall be Heirs of Salvation*; where in like manner their Ministration, so far as helpful and beneficial, is limited to those that shall be saved.

Now if you should here ask, Whether the protection of the Angels be so limited to those that are sincerely pious and religious, as that no wicked man is ever safeguarded or protected by them.

I Answer; God is at liberty to imploy them as he pleaseth; and as it seemeth good to him to give wicked men some very signal deliverances, so I know nothing to the contrary but that he may sometimes imploy his Angels to safeguard and protect them, especially when in their safety, the safety of his own people is highly concerned, or when he intends to make them eminent Instruments of good to his people. But though God may sometimes imploy his Angels to preserve them in their dangers; yet have they no promise to rely on. 'Tis

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no where said, that God hath given charge to his Angels to keep them in safety ; or that the Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them to deliver them. And therefore whatsoever the dangers of a wicked man may be, or how much soever he may at any time stand in need of the safeguard of Angels, he cannot either rest on, or plead any promise of God to that purpose , as a man that is sincerely godly may do. And so much by way of Answer to that Question.

*Quest. 2.* What are those ways of a good man in which the Angels have charge to keep him ? And why are they called his ways ?

I Answer ; Though the words run in general terms , *He shall give his Angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways* ; yet we may not understand it of whatsoever ways a man shall make choice of, and put himself into, how rashly, unadvisedly, and headily soever ; much less may it be understood of those ways that directly cross the Rule which God hath laid before us to frame our actions by. These and the like, are not the ways here intended ; the safeguard of Angels is not promised in such cases, nor indeed in any wicked undertaking , or rash and precipitant Adventure. The ways in this promise intended, are,

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1. The ways of a man's particular Calling, that honest Employment, whatever it be; in which the Providence of God hath engaged him.

2. All those other ways; which beside the ordinary ways of his particular Calling, a man is upon any special occasion, any just and lawful occasion, engaged in. These a man's ways are called his ways, because they are such as God hath chalked out to him, and assigned him to walk in; because they are the ways of his Duty, Place, and Calling; or the ways in which upon some special, just, and warrantable occasion the Providence of God hath set him. And this may suffice in Answer to that Question.

*Quest.* 3. How far may the safeguard and protection of Angels be expected by a good man that is careful to keep himself in these his ways? Is a man by vertue of this promise, absolutely and universally secured against miscarrying, or against all hurt; while he is found in these his ways, and hath a care not to turn aside into any By-way?

*Ans.* Not so; neither this nor any other promise of preserving his, that God hath made, can be so absolutely understood, but that still God reserves a liberty to himself



to deal otherwise with his Servants than the Letter of this promise seems to import, where and when to his Wisdom it shall seem good. All promises of Temporal things are to be understood with this limitation; namely, so far as it shall be for God's Glory, and our own good, and no further. A man that is required to serve his Prince in a just and a lawful War for the defence of his Country, hath as good a call to that undertaking as can possibly be; and yet he may be slain by the Sword of the Enemy. There is no Enterprize so prudent and advisable, so just and necessary, so honest and laudable; but that a man may sometimes miscarry in it, notwithstanding all the security that the promise of the safeguard and protection of the Angels gives him.

But you will say, What then is there in this privilege, that a good man hath the protection of Angels to keep him in all his ways? What doth the promise avail him, if however such Calamities may befall him? I answer; You may as well ask, what there is in any promise which God hath made concerning Temporal things. Will you say, that it had been as good that no such promises had ever been made, because notwithstanding them, God reserves to himself a liberty in some cases of dealing otherwise with his Children?

Is it nothing worth to be assured of the safeguard and protection of Angels, to preserve you in all your ways, and secure you against whatsoever evils you may be subject to, as far as it shall be for God's Glory, and your good? What can you rationally desire more? Would you have God secure you against all dangers, and give charge to his Angels to keep you in safety, though it be neither consistent with his Glory, nor with your good that it should so be? Be not so unreasonable as to desire it; nor so wretchedly unthankful, as to slight the promise as worth nothing unless it reach so far. I will at present suppose you to be one whose particular Calling and Employment lies much abroad, and engageth you to undertake many Journies. Now though you never travel but upon very just and necessary occasions, What if some time or other it should seem good unto God that you should take a dangerous fall from your Horse to the breaking of a Limb, or the bruising of your Body, so as your life is thereby endangered? Is it nothing in your account that you have been preserved in a Hundred other Journies, so as nothing of that nature ever beset you in any of them before? Besides all other preservations from the danger of Waters, and Highway-Robbers, and the like, Is there nothing in the promise of God that hath

so often and so many ways preserved you? Yea, that hath perhaps secured you from a Hundred dangers more that you never took notice of? And again, though for the present you suffer, yet it may be you are however more beholden to the protection of Angels than you are aware of. Though it be ill with you, yet who knows but that it might have been a great deal worse with you, if the care of the Angels had not interposed? You broke a Leg or an Arm; but had it not been for the Ministration of Angels, perhaps you had broken your Neck. Besides, you all this while consider not the wise and gracious ends of God in the hurt which beset you.

1. It may be it was to correct and chasten you for some sin before committed by you. Or,

2. To prevent some sin which God saw you were in danger of running into. Or,

3. To try and exercise, to increase and improve your Faith, Patience, and other Graces. Or,

4. To make you more sensible of, and thankful for all your former preservations, which perhaps you took little notice of, much less were duly thankful for. Or,

5. To give you experience of his care of you, of his gracious Providence, and tender Compassions towards you in that your Affliction.

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But suppose you lose your Life by your fall, and the Angels that attended you carry your Soul to Heaven, is it not your gain? Is not that Office of the Angels much better to a man, than to have kept him from danger? A Death we owe to God and Nature, and there is no other ordinary passage hence to Heaven, but by Death. And so we get safely to Heaven, we may be well contented that God should bring us thither by what kind of Death he pleaseth. It is most fit that He in whose hands our times are, and whose free gift Eternal Life is, should determine the circumstances of our Death, and bring us to Heaven as he pleaseth. In a word; though the holiest Man in the World is not by any promise absolutely and universally secured from suffering, yet is every good man secured from perishing, and everlastingly miscarrying by suffering.

Now it remains that I make some Application of what hath been said. Hath God been pleased to give his Angels charge over his Servants to keep them in all their ways?

1. Then let them be thankful to God for this inestimable privilege. And to the end they may be the more thankful for it, let them consider both how great an Honour, and how great a Security it is



to, them to be thus looked after, and guarded.

1. 'Tis a great Honour that God herein casts upon them. If an Earthly Prince should give a charge to one of his chief Servants, to attend the concerns of a poor despicable man, to look after him, and secure him from all dangers and hazards that he might be obnoxious to, though he were enjoined to do it but for one Month, or a Week, it were a singular favour, and a great honour to so mean a person. What an Honour then is it to weak and sinful Men, that are subject to a thousand dangers and casualties, to be continually safeguarded and protected by Angels, unto whom God hath assigned that employment, and charged them to attend it! The Blessed Angels are the most noble and excellent Creatures in the whole Creation. The greatest Potentates, Princes, or Emperors in the World, What are they in comparison of the Angels? They are indued with all manner of Perfections and Excellencies suitable to the high dignity of their natures, and that eminent rank which advanceth them far above all the Creatures in the visible or invisible World, (the human nature of Christ only accepted) *Eph. 1. 20. 21.* Besides, these Glorious Spirits are God's own immediate Retinue, that have the happiness to behold  
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his Face always, *Matth.* 18. 10. and to stand before him, and minister to him continually, *Dan.* 7. 10.

2. 'Tis a great security to them to be so guarded ; for such is the knowledge and strength of Angels, and such is their faithfulness in the discharge of the trust committed to them, that nothing more can be desired in order to our safety, than that the Angels undertake our Protection. These things considered, the honour and the security of the Angels being charged to take care of us, and preserve us in all our ways, how can we be thankful enough to God for this high favour and singular dignation? And yet 'tis much to be feared, that few of God's Children have ever been in any measure duly affected with, or sensible of this great mercy.

2. Hath God been pleased to give his Angels charge over his People, to keep and preserve them in all their ways? This then may encourage them to trust in God at all times, even in the greatest dangers ; as also freely and boldly to hazard themselves in his service upon all just occasions. Though we live in perilous times, and we know not how soon our dangers may be much greater than they are ; though as our present circumstances are, we know not what dismal things a day may bring forth ; yet having the Angels of God pre-

sent with us to protect us, we may say with David, *Psal. 3. 6. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that should set themselves against me round about.* We read *Isai. 37. 36.* that one Angel could do more for God's people, than an Army of an Hundred fourscore and five thousand could do against them. But that you may be able upon good grounds to expect the protection of the Angels, Be ever careful to walk with God, and not to turn aside out of those ways which he hath appointed you. In all dangers which at any time you expose your self unto, be sure that you have God's call thereunto, and that you never presume to hazard your self rashly or unwarrantably.

3. Are Angels, those Excellent Creatures, those Glorious Spirits, in Obedience to God's Command, and the charge that he hath given them, willing to stoop so low as to watch over, and take care of such poor and vile Creatures as sinful men, dust and ashes are, in comparison of themselves? How ready and willing then should we be to stoop to the performance of the meanest offices of love to any that may stand in need of our help, and to whom by our assistance we may be any way useful? How mean soever the persons are that stand in need of our assistance, and how mean soever the services are in which

we are helpful to them, our condescension therein is nothing in comparison of the condescension of the Angels to do us good.

4. Are the Angels upon all occasions at hand to watch over, take care of, and preserve God's people? Then let the consideration hereof ingage us to carry our selves with so much the more holy watchfulness and circumspection. If the Presence of a good man hath some influence upon us to make us careful how we carry and demean our selves in his Eye; how much more should the Presence of the Holy Angels, those pure and spotless Creatures that cannot endure to behold our sinful Excesses and Miscarriages! In 1 Cor. 11. 10. the Apostle persuading Christians, and especially Women, to a becoming and modest carriage, and demeanor of themselves in the Assemblies of God's People, saith; *for this cause ought the woman to have power on her head, because of the Angels.* That is, according to the interpretation of Learned men, she ought to have a vail or covering on her Head, which the Apostle calls by the name of Power, because 'tis a sign of the man's power over her, the sign being put for the thing signified. Now this decency and modesty in her attire, the Apostle urgeth in regard of the Angels who are present in holy Assemblies,

blies, and observe the carriage and dresses of such as there present themselves before God. So then if the consideration of God's Presence will not prevail with them so far as to make them attire themselves modestly, and demean themselves reverently; yet the consideration of the Presence of the Holy Angels should do it. But such is the vanity and immodesty of the Age in which we live, that many come to the Publick Assemblies in such a manner, and in such disguises, as if they neither regarded the Presence of God, nor of the Holy Angels.

5. Are all God's Children under the safeguard and protection of the Holy Angels? Are the Angels charged to keep them in all their ways? Then let wicked men take heed how they attempt to wrong or injure them: There is no safe meddling with those who have such a guard about them. This Argument our Saviour made use of when he would caution men against despising little ones, *Matth. 18. 10.* *Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their Angels do always behold the face of my father which is in Heaven.* If that consideration should keep us from despising them, how much more from injuring them?

6. Are the Blessed Angels charged to keep God's people in all their ways? As there is occasion doth God send forth some of these Ministering Spirits to safeguard and protect them? Then let this, amongst other things, stir up such as are yet in ways of Enmity and Rebellion against God, to labour to make their peace with him, that so God being their Friend, they may come to be under the care and protection of his Angels. If an interest in this great privilege were ever desirable, certainly 'tis at present, when our fears and dangers are so great.

And thus I have done with Satan's Second temptation, together with his enforcement of it from Scripture. I now come to our Saviour's Reply thereunto in the next words, *Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.*

Here first we may observe, That whereas our Saviour might have excepted against Satan's allegation of the passage out of *Psal. 91.* now last insisted on; I say, whereas our Saviour might have excepted against Satan's allegation of that passage of Scripture, both because it was by him misapplied, and because it was imperfectly and fraudulently alledged, that part of it being



ing left out, which made against the Tempter ; He passeth by both the one and the other, and takes no expresse notice of either, but only opposeth a plain and pertinent Scripture against his temptation, as also he doth in his Reply to both the other temptations. Herein no doubt his design was by his own example to teach us what the best and safest course is when we are tempted by Satan ; that is to say, Not to reason or dispute the matter with the Devil, how much reason soever we may think we have on our side, but to betake our selves immediately to the Sword of the Spirit, and to resist him with that Weapon ; to oppose Scripture against his temptations. The Devil is a most subtil and cunning Sophister, and therefore 'tis a dangerous thing to enter the Lists with him in way of dispute ; so weak and unexperienced are we, and so dexterous is he at that way of fencing, and so long exercised and vers'd in it, that 'tis great odds but that he will be too hard for us. Wherefore if we be wise, when we are tempted, let us not venture the issue of our contests with him upon our own skill or ability in disputing ; but let us presently run to God's Armory, the Holy Scriptures, and take thence such Weapons as are fittest for the present use we are to make of them. And here it will be our concernment, and our wisdom, to labour

to be thoroughly acquainted, and compleatly furnished with those passages of Scripture that we most need; and which we find will be of most advantage to us in respect of the frequent occasions we shall have of employing them, and making use of them. More plainly; Every man should be in some good measure acquainted with his own particular weaknesses, and the temptations with which he is most often assaulted. Now where he is weakest, and where he finds by experience that the Devil most lays at him, and assaults him, there especially should he be provided and furnished with whatever weapons the Holy Scriptures supplies him with for his own defence. He that is not thus provided and furnished, is like a City broken down, and without walls, that lies open to every incursion of the Enemy. Most sad and miserable therefore is their condition who either have no acquaintance with their own weaknesses and temptations, or are so careless and regardless of their own safety, that they make no provision to secure themselves against their spiritual Enemy.

In the 2<sup>d</sup> place we may observe, That though the Devil abused Scripture, yet our Saviour makes use of it still; *Jesus said unto him, It is written again.* Good things are never the worse for being abused by the  
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the Devil and his wicked Instruments. It is a great mistake to think, That things through the abuse of them either by Satan himself, or by his Agents, are so polluted and defiled, as they must immediately be thrown aside with detestation and abhorrence, and never be taken up again, or made use of any more. What if some parts of *St. John's* Gospel be horribly abused and prophaned by Witches in their Charms and Spells, must the whole Gospel be laid aside, or those abused passages be removed? What if the Devil abuse a passage out of the Psalms; must we therefore lose a most sweet and comfortable Promise, and blot it out of our Bibles? After this rate it would be in the power of the Devil to deprive us of all the Holy Scriptures, by abusing one part after another, till no part remained. So, what if Idolaters and Superstitious people abuse the Scriptures, and many passages of Publick Liturgies, agreeable to Scripture, by taking them into the Mass-Book, and making use of them in their Idolatrous Worship, are these things by their horrid abuses of them made incapable of being made use of without sin? Have they by that abuse contracted such pollution and defilement, as renders them for ever so abominable, as that henceforth no man may lawfully touch them, or make use of them in the service of God? No such matter

matter ; Wicked men have no such power to alter the nature of things good in themselves meerly by their abuse of them. If they were good before, they are so still ; and if there might be a lawful use of them before, there may still be. I shall both illustrate and prove this by what the Apostle determines concerning Meats offered to Idols, about which there were some scruples among Christians in the Primitive Church. It was the judgment of some men, That Meats offered to Idols were so defiled thereby, that it was sinful for any man to eat them. But St. Paul states the matter far otherwise ; In 1 Cor. 10. 25. He bids them *eat whatever is sold in the shambles, asking no question for conscience sake ;* that is, without any scrupulous enquiry whether it had been Sacrificed to Idols or no. And then v. 30. he adds, *If I by grace be a partaker, Why am I evil-spoken of for that for which I give thanks ?* And in the same manner he states the Controversy in 1 Cor. 8. 4. where he saith, *That an Idol is nothing ;* thereby giving us to understand, that seeing 'tis nothing, it may not be thought to have any power of polluting those things that are offered to it. And then v. 8. *Meat, saith he, commendeth us not unto God ; for neither if we eat are we the better ; neither if we eat not, are we the worse.* Only he adds, *That though the*  
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thing be lawful in it self, yet in case of offence a man ought to forbear. So then from the whole of the Apostle's Discourse 'tis evident, That the abuse of a thing to Superstitious and Idolatrous purposes, doth not render the use of it unlawful; which was the thing to be proved.

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## The Thirteenth Sermon.

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### M A T T H. IV. 7.

*It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.*

**I**T now remains that I should consider the Portion of Scripture which our Saviour alledgeth, and opposeth against Satan's temptation: *It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.* These words are written in the 6th Chapter of *Deut.* v. 16. where something is added by way of explication of them: *Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God as ye tempted him in Massah.* How they tempted him in *Massah*, we read, *Exod.* 17. 1, 2, 7. There 'tis Recorded, That the people being distressed for want of water, did chide with *Moses*, and tempted the Lord, saying, *Is the Lord among us, or not?* They doubted of God's Presence with them, and of his Gracious Providence over them, and would not believe it, unless he should give demonstration thereof by a miraculous supply of  

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their want in their present necessity. Now though this be one way of tempting God, when people will not believe him, and depend on his Providence, unless he shall be pleased to relieve them in their distresses by such extraordinary ways of Providence as they shall prescribe ; yet the sin forbidden under the Phrase of not tempting God, is of much larger extent. To tempt, among other significations of the word, is to prove, or make trial of ; and this with relation to God, is sinfully and wickedly done, when we make needless or presumptuous trial and experiment of his Presence, Providence, Truth, Power, Mercy, or Justice ; which may be done many ways.

As, 1. When a man shall run upon apparent dangers without a Call, unwarrantably relying on God's Providence for his preservation. Thus the Devil would have had our Saviour tempt God ; for to have cast himself down from a Pinnacle of the Temple, depending on God's care of him to keep him from taking hurt thereby, had been no other than a tempting God in an horrible manner, he having no call to such an adventure, and there being no promise of God to preserve him in that case.

Many instances of tempting God this way there may be given. As for example ; When a man depending on God's Providence

dence for his preservation, shall causlessly force the Horse he rides on to leap over or pass through dangerous places, to the needless hazarding of the life of Man and Beast, though he may as well decline the danger, as run upon it. So when a man to no other end than to make discovery of the undauntedness and daringness of his Spirit, shall walk upon dangerous Battlements, or stand upon the top of a Steeple. Hitherto may be referred the rash and unwarrantable adventure of them that daunce upon Ropes; for which unjustifiable tempting God, some may have paid dearly by breaking their Limbs or their Necks; and 'tis an effect of the wonderful patience of God, that such fearful accidents do not oftener befall men addicting themselves to that dangerous Ostentation of their Agility. And little better is their practice of swallowing poysons: For though they fortify their Bodies against the malignity of them, by Sovereign Antidotes; yet their Antidotes may fail them sometimes. And besides, though for the present they may seem to have taken no hurt by the poison which they swallowed, yet it may leave those malignant impressions upon their Bodies, that may shorten their days. I shall add but one instance more, and it shall be of those who hazard their lives by fighting Duels, wherein there is a bold tempting

God, by making trial whether or no he will preserve them, and bring them off with safety.

But here, perhaps, it will be said, A man may have a call to fight a Duel; and if so, he cannot be said to hazard his life unwarrantably. He may be challenged, and then it will stand him upon in point of Honour to Answer the Challenge. If he should draw back, and decline it, he should be branded for a Coward; and a perpetual blot, a black mark of ignominy and disgrace would for ever rest upon himself and his Family. Wherefore, being in these circumstances, he thinks he lies under an absolute necessity of hazarding his life, unless he will forfeit what is most dear to him, his Reputation and Honour. To this I Answer,

I. That the nature of Honour is misunderstood, and very much mistaken by such as thus plead for, and defend their rash adventures. 'Tis a Christian's Honour to Conform himself to the Doctrine of Christ, and to walk suitable to the Principles of that Holy Religion which he makes Profession of, and not to allow himself to make use of those expedients for preserving his Reputation, and vindicating his Honour, which God allows him not to  
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make use of. 'Tis a Christian's Honour to put up wrongs, and to bear injuries patiently ; to render good for evil ; to Bless them that Curse him, and to pray for them that despitefully use him and persecute him. 'Tis a Christian's Honour to imitate Christ, whose incomparable Meekness, Patience, and Long-sufferance was such as no injuries or affronts that were offered him could prevail with him to make any other returns to his most bitter and implacable Enemies, than those of Love and Kindness, of seasonable Rebukes, wholesome Counsels, and holy Admonitions ; who gave his Back to the Smiters, and his Cheek to them that plucked off the Hair, *Isai.* 50. 6. who when he was reviled, reviled not again ; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously, *1 Pet.* 2. 23.

2. As for the Brand of Cowardise, that is so much dreaded in case a Challenge should not be Answered, What a vain Scare-crow is that ! Who are they that will set that Brand upon a man that refuseth to venture his Life upon such an account, but such as are most incompetent Judges, either of Cowardice or Valour, of Honour or Dishonour ? As for all wise and sober persons, they will judge it much more honourable to have refused the Chal-



lenge, than to have accepted it. 'Tis no Cowardice in any man to refuse to hazard his Life, and his Soul also, upon the vapouring Challenge of every vicious Ruffian, or lewd Gallant; and as little courage is there in being forward to cast away his Life, and venture his Soul upon such terms. 'Tis True Valour and Fortitude to be able and willing to venture a man's Life upon a just Call thereunto, in Defence of his Prince, his Countrey, and Religion.

3. He that either casts away his own Life, or takes away the Life of his Brother, contracts the horrid guilt of Murther, which nothing but the Blood of Christ can make Expiation for; and besides, he leaves so deep a stain of real ignominy upon his own Person and his Family, as all the Water in the Ocean can never wash off. What madness then were it for any man deliberately to chuse rather to involve himself in such guilt, and bring such a foul blot upon himself and his Family, than to be called Coward by those who never understood what true Valour means!

4. It is also further to be considered, That no man hath the disposal of his own Life, so as he may part with it, and cast it away as he pleaseth. As we have received life from God, so we must keep it till he calls for  
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for it again ; and then to part with it cheerfully, is our duty ; but to throw it away before he calls for it, would be our great sin.

5. Life is the chief of all Temporal Blessings, and ought to be so accounted by us ; but either to yield up or hazard our life upon every trifling occasion, (and a Thraasonical Challenge is no better) were an unworthy disesteem, and an ingrateful undervaluing of so great a Blessing.

And so much concerning that first way of tempting God, when a man shall run upon apparent dangers without a call.

2. A man tempts God when he neglects to make use of those lawful means for his preservation, which the Providence of God offers. Thus if a man's House were fired on the Lord's Day, and he should sit still and forbear to use any endeavours for quenching the fire, relying on God's Providence to put a stop to it. This was the case of the *Jews* ; who when their City was fired by the enemy on the Sabbath-Day, made use of no means for quenching the fire, and securing their Houses, for fear of violating the Sabbath ; but committed the preservation of the City to the Providence of God. This sin indeed pro-

ceeded from an erroneous Opinion, That it was unlawful for them on the Sabbath-Day to use any means to preserve the City ; but though the miserable Sufferers were so much the more to be pitied ; yet was it a tempting God by relying on his Power and Providence, in the neglect of means, which in that case of necessity he allowed them to make use of even on the Sabbath-Day. For as our Saviour saith in another case of like nature : *The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath* , Mark 2. 27. So if in time of Sicknes a man should refuse to make use of Physick, and the helps of Art, relying on God's Providence for his recovery, in the neglect of means by him provided and prescribed, and upon the use whereof he ordinarily gives a Blessing ; Or if men should, as 'tis said the common sort among the *Turks* do, and too many among ignorant and perverse Christians ; They are resolved not to be tampering with Art, let God work his will concerning them ; (that is the word) If it be his pleasure that they shall live , then live they shall ; but if not, they must dye. But this is no less a tempting God, than as if a man should refuse Food as well as Physick, and say, If it please God that I shall live, then I shall live whether I eat or fast ; and if it be his pleasure that I dye, then dye I must however. But  
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Such obstinate people do not consider; That God expects we should serve his Providence in the use of means for obtaining the good things which we desire ; and that no man can, without tempting God, rely on his Providence while he neglects means. 'Tis true, God can without means relieve you, how great soever your distresses are ; but do you expect that God should wave the ordinary Course of his Providence, and work a Miracle to preserve you ? If you do, you tempt him, and for that your sin he may justly leave you to perish in your affliction. The like tempting God it is, if when the Pestilence most fiercely rageth in a place, a man should refuse to make use of any Antidote for his preservation, or to withdraw from those Parts where the heat and malignity of the Infection is greatest, though there be no necessity of his continuance there, nor any thing which he may look upon as a sufficient call for his longer abode where the danger is so great. In this case also a man should tempt God in depending on his Providence for his preservation, though he wilfully refuse to make use of the means thereof. These instances may suffice concerning that second way of tempting God.

3. Another way of tempting God, is when we take upon us either to limit him,  
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or to prescribe to him what he should do for us, when, how, and by what means he should satisfy our desires, or relieve us in our straits. Thus did the *Israelites*, *Psal.* 78. 41. *They turned back, and tempted God, and limited the holy One of Israel.* This may be done several ways.

As, 1. When we set bounds to the Power of God, and shut it up within the compass of those limits which we have assigned unto it. When we say in our hearts, This God can do, and that he cannot do. This did that unbelieving and obstinate people, *Psal.* 87. 19, 20. *They spake against God, and said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Behold, he smote the rock that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; Can he give bread also? Can he provide flesh for his people? And thus in our distresses, we often fix limits and boundaries to his Omnipotency. If God had come in to our relief sooner, then our misery might have been prevented; but now 'tis too late; 'tis in vain to hope for succour from him. So again, If our condition had been only thus or thus, we might have expected a good issue of our troubles; but as our present circumstances are, our case is desperate. Thus what *David's Enemies* said of him in his distress, *There is no help for him in God*, *Pl.* 3. 2. that we are ready to say of ourselves.*

And



And as we thus limit God's Power, so also we limit his Wisdom and his Mercy: His Wisdom, when because our straits and entanglements are so perplex'd and intricate, that we see no way of winding our selves out of them, we look upon our condition as forlorn and desperate; as if the Infinite Wisdom of God could not most easily contrive many ways for our deliverance, though we can see none.

In like manner we are apt to limit the Mercy of God, concluding and shutting it up within those bounds which we in our own narrow thoughts have set it. What more ordinary than when a man is much amazed at the frightful view of his great and manifold provocations, to say with himself, If my Sins were but such and such; if they were not so heinous and numerous; if I had not so long continued in them; if they were not heightened by so many circumstances of aggravation; if I had not obstinately stood out against so many offers of mercy, then I could hope that I might obtain forgiveness; but having sinned as I have done, I fear there is small reason to entertain any hopes that so great a Sinner should ever find mercy with God. Thus we straiten God's mercy, and confine it within those limits which the word hath not bounded it with. For therein God hath most plainly declared,

declared, that no truly penitent Sinner shall be denied mercy ; and that there is only one unpardonable Sin , namely, that against the Holy Ghost , which also is therefore unpardonable, because he that hath committed it is so hardened that he never truly repenteth of it. As for all other sins, neither the great number , nor the heinous nature of them, nor the long continuance of the sinner in them, nor any thing else that can be named, shall hinder the Sinner's obtaining the pardon of them, if he be ever humbled for them, really abandon and forsake them, and betake himself to Christ, by a true and lively Faith receiving him, and casting himself upon him.

2. As we tempt God when we limit him as to his Power, Wisdom, and Mercy ; so do we also when we take upon us to prescribe to him what he should do for us, when, how, and by what means he should satisfy our desires, or relieve us in our straits. Thus the *Pharisees* and *Sadducees* would have Christ shew them a sign from Heaven, *Mat. 16. 1.* All the Miracles which he wrought amongst them, were not sufficient ; they must prescribe to him how he should give proof of his Divine Power, and of the truth of his Doctrine ; they must have their own asking, a sign from Heaven they must have, or else they would not believe. And

And much after the same manner do we prescribe to God, when we would have him gratify us, and do for us, not as to his Wisdom seems best, but as is most agreeable to our corrupt affections and humours. Thus when we have Prayed, we would have God answer our Prayers by such a time; and if his answers come not within the time which in our Thoughts we have prescribed and set him for answering us, our Faith, and Hope, and Prayers, are at an end; we can pray no longer; we give our Prayers for lost, and we have no hope or expectation of reaping any benefit from them.

So likewise if God do not help us, relieve us, or do us good by such means and instruments as were in our eye when we prayed; if the expedients fail us which we thought God should have made use of to convey mercy to us, and work our deliverance for us, then we begin to think we have lost our labour, and so can neither pray, nor wait on God any longer. As if God must be tied up to our Methods, Instruments, and Expedients to do us good; and as if no mercy might be expected from him, unless it come in our way, the way that we have contrived in our own minds, and in effect set down and prescribed to him, in which way, or no way, he must answer our Prayers. There  
are

are Three things at the bottom of this Distemper.

1. Low and Mean thoughts of God, and a taking measure of his Wisdom, Power and Goodness, by our selves.

2. An over-valuing of our own Wisdom and Contrivance, as if our Way must be the best, and our Expedients the fittest.

3. A great deal of unbelief, and distrust of God's Power, Wisdom, Goodness, and Truth.

And thus I have at length done with the Second Temptation of Satan.

I go on now to his Third and Last temptation, together with the issue of that and all his temptations, in the 8th, 9th, 10th, and 11th Verses. *Again, the Devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world; and the glory of them; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me: Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the Devil leaveth him, and behold, Angels came, and ministred unto him.*

In which words we have these general parts :

1. What Satan did to make way for the temptation with which he intended yet further to assault our Saviour.
2. The temptation it self.
3. Christ's Reply thereunto.
4. The issue of this, and all his temptations. Of these in order.

As for the First particular, what Satan did to make way for his temptation ; this is set down in the 8th Verse. *Again, the Devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them. Again, that is, after he had been twice overcome.*

Whence we may observe, That the Devil doth not presently give over tempting, though he hath been strenuously and vigorously resisted. Though he hath been worsted once and again, yet he gives a third onset. And this may teach us,

1. Not to be discouraged though the resistance we make against Satan doth not immediately beat him off and put him to flight. We must still go on to make resistance, as he goes on to renew his temptations, and then we shall be sure to put him



him to flight in due time, though for the exercise of our Faith and other Graces, God may suffer him to cast many fiery Darts at us before we be rid of him.

2. We may also hence learn, Not to be secure after we have well quitted our selves in withstanding our spiritual Enemy, and worsted him more than once. Never was he more vigorously resisted, nor more shamefully foiled and overcome, than by our Saviour; and yet he comes on again however with a second and a third assault. If he was so bold and obstinate in pursuing his temptations when he had to do with Christ, though he saw he was still overcome by him, have any of us reason to expect better measure at his hands?

And so much concerning that Observation, which I have little more than mentioned, as having had occasion of speaking something to like purpose before.

*Again the Devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain. Again, that is, after that he had tried what he could do by two other temptations of a different nature before. Now he comes to make a further experiment upon Christ by a temptation of another kind; by a temptation that much differ'd from both the former.*

And hence we may observe, That Satan hath variety of temptations, which he makes

makes use of as occasion serves, to the end that if one temptation take not effect, another may. He knows men are of various tempers and dispositions; and therefore though they close not with one sort of temptations, yet he hopes they may close with another. He is not ignorant, that they who resist some kinds of temptations stoutly and courageously, are easily worsted and foiled by temptations of another kind. Wherefore it concerns us to be ever armed against all sorts of temptations; though we must more especially provide that we be well fortified there where our danger is greatest, and where we have been oftenest overcome.

Now as in reference to Bodily Diseases and Infirmities, there are some Catholick or Universal Antidotes and Preservatives that fence and strengthen Nature against the incursion, if not of all, yet of many Distempers; so it is in spiritual things: Though there be some proper and peculiar Antidotes and Preservatives against the Venom of particular temptations; yet there are also some Catholick Antidotes that have a most Sovereign Vertue to fence and fortify us against all sorts of temptations. Now in regard that we know not in what kind we may be assaulted, and so perhaps cannot always be furnished before-hand with proper, specifick, and peculiar Antidotes against

every sort of temptations that we may meet with ; it is therefore advisable , and will be our Wisdom, to endeavour to have always in a readiness some Catholick Antidotes that may stand us in stead, whatever the temptations be that Satan makes use of against us. These Catholick Antidotes are divers. I shall mention Two or Three of them.

1. The Consideration of the great evil of Sin is a Catholick Antidote, an universal Preservative against all sorts of temptations to Sin. He that constantly looks upon Sin as the greatest evil in the World, and hath this persuasion of the evil of it firmly rooted in his mind, will not easily be induced to close with any temptation to sin. When temptations prevail with us, 'tis either because we have not at present clear apprehensions of the sinfulness of what we are tempted to , or because we have not present clear apprehensions of the great evil of Sin. Keep this ever in your eye, and upon your heart, That sin is the greatest evil ; that there is no evil in the World so much to be dreaded and shunned ; and then you are safe. With this Sovereign Antidote Joseph withstood the temptation with which his lewd Mistress assaulted him, saying, *How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God,* Gen. 39. 9.

2. Another Catholick Antidote against all sorts of temptations to sin, is the consideration of the worth and excellency of peace of Conscience, and the sense of God's Favour; the loss of both which a man hazards, that wittingly and knowingly yields and consents to those solicitations by which he is tempted to any sin. Surely that man must needs have a low esteem of God's Favour, and peace of Conscience, that shall be ready to forfeit and forego both the one and the other, so he may gratify his own Lusts. Let this Antidote therefore be still lying by you; and whenever you are tempted to any kind of sin, presently oppose it against the temptation, and say, 'How can I be so foolish as to venture the loss of God's Favour, and the peace of my Conscience (which are treasures of greater value than all the most precious and desirable things in the World) only that I may enjoy the Carnal satisfaction, and Muddy content which the empty and waterish pleasures of Sin that on a sudden vanish, and end in bitterness, will afford me? Let me for ever abhor the thought of being guilty of such folly.

3. Another Catholick Antidote or Universal preservative against all sorts of temptations to Sin, is, the Consideration of the uncertainty of our Life. The most Youthful and Vigorous, the most Strong

and Healthy, the person that amongst us all is most likely to live many Years, hath no security for the continuance of his life for one Day, for one Hour, for one half Quarter of an Hour longer. Let this Antidote also be still in a readiness to be opposed against whatsoever temptation to sin may offer it self. When any Temptation presents its Self, Reason thus with your self:

‘ My Life is uncertain ; the continuance  
 ‘ of it depends every moment upon the sole  
 ‘ good pleasure of God ; and what his pleasure concerning the shortening or lengthening out of my Life is, I cannot tell ;  
 ‘ ’tis a secret which God hath reserved to  
 ‘ himself, and which he hath thought fit to  
 ‘ keep within his own Breast. If I should  
 ‘ now yield unto the Commission of the  
 ‘ sin unto which I am tempted, who knows  
 ‘ but that he may put an end to my days  
 ‘ the very next moment after the Commission thereof? yea, who knows but that  
 ‘ I may be cut off in the very act of sinning?  
 ‘ Can the Devil, that tempts me to sin, or  
 ‘ all the Devils in Hell ; yea, or all the  
 ‘ Angels in Heaven, secure me against it ?  
 ‘ Shall I therefore run so desperate an hazard as to sin deliberately and wittingly,  
 ‘ when for ought I know, or any Creature  
 ‘ in Heaven, Earth, or Hell, can assure me  
 ‘ to



‘to the contrary, I may be just now upon  
‘the very Borders of another World, and  
‘the sin which I am solicited to com-  
‘mit, may, if I consent to it, be the last  
‘thing that I shall ever do in this World ?  
These Catholick Antidotes, or any one of  
them, if seasonably and effectually applied  
and made use of, would be sufficient to  
blunt the edge, and weaken the force of  
any temptation. But our misery is, That  
when temptations assault us, they hurry  
us into sin with such impetuosity and  
violence, that no resistance is made ; we  
are overcome before we can take up our  
weapons to fight the Enemy ; we are in-  
fected, and mortally sick of sin and guilt,  
before we can make use of any Antidote  
or defensive against it. We may have  
Sovereign Antidotes lying by us, but what  
will they avail us in the hour of tempta-  
tion, if we never make use of them ?  
Wherefore in the approach of temptations,  
let us absolutely and peremptorily resolve,  
that we will betake our selves to one or  
more of these preservatives before we give  
way to the temptation ; and this, as it is  
to be hoped, may prove an effectual means  
of wholly preventing our giving way to  
it. But then our care must be, not to ap-  
ply these Antidotes slightly and carelessly,  
but so to manage them as our Souls may  
have the full benefit of all the vertue and

efficacy that is in them. And we must know, That they will never exert and put forth their vertue and efficacy upon the Soul, unless they be warmed and applied by serious Meditation, and earnest Prayer. A few slight and overly thoughts of these Preservatives, will do us no good. The efficacy of them wholly depends upon the right manner and method of using and improving them. And this may suffice to have been spoken concerning that Observation.

Now to go on with the Text ; *The Devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain.* That this was done really, and not only in a vision, the words, and the whole carriage of the Narration plainly shew, there being no expression plainly used that may induce us to apprehend it to have been only in way of vision. Then as touching the manner of his being taken up into the Mountain, 'tis most probable that the Devil here again transported his Body from the Pinnacle of the Temple to the top of the Mountain, as he had before transported him from the Wilderness into the Holy City, and there set him on a Pinnacle of the Temple. Both the one and the other seems to have been done by way of local motion, and both by the Devil immediately, according to that power which

which he hath, and by God's permission exerciseth, of translating or carrying Bodies from place to place.

Concerning this his power over the Bodies of men, of the best of men, I have spoken at large formerly;

And upon that occasion shewed how great a mercy 'tis that God is pleased to set bounds to the great power of the Devils, and that he doth not permit them to use their power as they list; but that he so restrains and limits them in the exercise of their power, that they cannot do One thousand part of that mischief which their malice would carry them to do, if they were not curbed and held in by the powerful restraints of God's Providence.

I have also before shewed, that the power which the Devil exerciseth over the Bodies of men either by possession or transportation of them, or by inflicting grievous things on them, is no Argument that such persons belong not to God. If the Devil by God's permission had such power of transferring the Body of Christ from one place to another, Why may he not exercise the like power over the Bodies of any of God's Children? Let none therefore be discouraged, and conclude themselves to be Cast-aways, or utterly rejected of God upon any such account,

but let them acknowledge God's chastening hand in giving the Devil such power over their Bodies, and let them labour to make a wise and holy improvement of that fore chastisement, and to profit by it ; and they shall therein find that God turns the malice of the Devil to their spiritual advantage, and furthers their Salvation by that whereby the Devil intended their destruction.

It follows in the Text ; *The Devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain , and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them.* That this could not be shew'd Christ thence by any ordinary way of representation, is evident ; because though we should suppose that Mountain to have been much higher than the highest Mountain in the World ; yet a great part of the World could not thence be seen. We must therefore of necessity conceive, That the Devil used his Art in thus representing to our Saviour's eye all the Kingdoms of the World, and the glory of them. The Devil hath ways of deluding the sense, and of presenting those things to the eye that are not, or that are at so great a distance that they cannot be seen as they are in themselves. And thus might Satan shew our Saviour all the Kingdoms of the World and the glory of them. Some such Artificial representation must be supposed, unless we would rather conceive, That in presenting

presenting to his view a great part of the Kingdoms of the World and the glory of them ; namely , as much as from the top of that Mountain could in an ordinary way be seen, he in effect presented to the eye of Christ all the Kingdoms of the World, and the glory of them ; because by what was seen, the extent and glory of the rest might easily be apprehended. I shall not take upon me to determine in which of these two ways all the Kingdoms of the World and the glory of them was presented to our Saviour's eye ; but which way soever it were, the scope and design of the Devil herein is evident. He thus shews him the Kingdoms of the World and the glory of them , that he might thereby get into his Heart by the eye, and kindle in him such a love and admiration of the World, and the glory of it , as might make way for the temptation which he should presently assault him with, and dispose him to a more ready compliance with it. So then there is indeed a double temptation here laid before our Saviour ; the one principal, the other less principal and subordinate thereunto. Satan's principal temptation , and that which he chiefly designed , was , To prevail with Christ to fall down and Worship him. His less principal and subordinate temptation , or the temptation which he made use of as a means or an expedient



ent to make his principal temptation take effect, was, To poison his Heart with the inordinate love and admiration of the World, and of the glory thereof. If once his heart were possessed with the love of the World, he made little question but that he had such a proffer to make him, as would allure him to do any thing whereby he might gain it.

Here we may observe, 1. That Satan abuseth our external senses, to make them inlets of Sin into the Soul. But above all other senses he chiefly abuseth our most excellent senses, those of Seeing and Hearing. Through these two senses, what a world of Sin doth the Devil convey into the Soul! Here first he endeavours to convey sin into our Saviour's Heart, by the Eye representing to his view all the Kingdoms of the World, and the glory of them. And then presently he endeavours to abuse his Ear, saying to him, *If thou wilt fall down and worship me, all these things will I give thee.* Thus was Eve seduced, drawn off from her Obedience to God, and persuaded to eat of the forbidden Fruit, by the abuse of both those Senses. First she gives ear to the suggestions of the Devil by the mouth of the Serpent; and then *she saw that the tree was good for food; and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired*

*fired to make one wife ; and thereupon she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat ; and gave also unto her husband, and he did eat, Gen. 3.3,4, 5, 6.* This may admonish us to guard our senses carefully, and to keep a strict watch over them, especially our eyes and our ears, that sin get not in by either of these Windows. How frequently sin steals into the Soul by these passages, every good Christian's experience witnesseth. If any man think there is no such danger, and consequently no necessity of so much watchfulness, he must needs be a person that little observes his own heart, and is little acquainted with his natural corruption, and his proneness to take hurt by every temptation. *Job* was not of the mind, that there is so little danger of sins creeping into the heart by the external senses : Otherwise he would not have made a Covenant with his eyes, as he did, *Job* 31. 1. How little do they consider this, and how regardless are they of the safety of their Souls, who care not how they set open the Windows of their external senses to all sorts of temptations !

2. Whereas Satan presents to our Saviour's eye all the Kingdoms of the World and the glory of them, but makes no representation of the cares and troubles, the crosses and disasters, the unhappy casualties, and sad accidents ; the various miseries

ries and calamities which even they are subject to, who are at the top of all worldly felicity ; We may observe, That the Devil in his temptations shews us the best side of those earthly things which he would have us in love with ; but the dark side he conceals from us ; whatsoever may surprize our affections ; whatsoever may entice and allure us we shall see ; but no part of what may cool our love , and allay the heat of our affections ; much less of what may fright us, and scare us off.

The proper use hereof is to caution us to use all that wariness and circumspection which they are concerned to use, who have so crafty and politick an Adversary to deal with. It behoves us to be always jealous of his proffers by whomsoever they are made, or what instruments soever he employs to treat with us. It concerns us to beware that we give no credit to his representation of things ; ever making full account that we shall find there is not one half of that content and satisfaction in the enjoyment of the things of this World, that Satan makes shew of , besides the many fore evils which lie hid under that amiable and glorious portraicture of them which is in our eye. If this had been seasonably and seriously minded by men whose hearts were set upon the World , there would not have been so many sad complaints

plaints of unhappy men, that the charms of the deceitful World bewitched them and by the hopes of earthly pleasure and felicity, seduced them into Woe and Misery.

Again : Whereas Satan being about to tempt our Saviour to the most horrid Idolatry, endeavours to dispose and prepare him to close with that horrible temptation, by instilling into his heart a love of the world :

We may observe, That the inordinate love of this world in the heart of Man, is a most dangerous and pernicious evil, that disposeth a man to the commission of the most heinous sins. Satan intending to tempt our Saviour *to fall down and worship him*, would not have made choice of this expedient, but that he knew it to be most fit for his purpose. He had found by manifold experience that the love of the world would draw men on to all manner of wickedness. He had often found how easily worldly-minded men are taken when he Fisheth with this Bait. Get but the world into their hearts, and they stick at nothing that may further the obtaining of their desires. Hence it is that the Apostle saith, *The love of money is the root of all evil*, 1 Tim. 6. 10. And St. John affirms, the love of the world, that is, the inordinate and predominant love thereof to be utterly inconsistent with the love of God.

Love

*Love not the world, neither the things of the world ; if any man love this world, the love of the Father is not in him, 1 John 2. 15.* The Uses that I shall make hereof shall be these Two.

*Use 1.* This informs us how great a mercy it is, and ought to be esteemed, to have our hearts in any measure freed from this pestilent Corruption ; to have attained such moderation of our affections to the world, as that we neither love the world, nor the things of the world inordinately, nor pursue them eagerly and restlessly. Oh how many temptations doth this either free us from, or fortify us against, which a man whose heart is full of the love of this world, is frequently assaulted with, and as frequently overcome as assaulted. And moreover how many sollicitous Cares and Anxieties, how many Vexations and Distractions doth it ease a man of, which he whose heart is possessed with the love of the world is never without ? Which incessantly toss and hurry his mind hither and thither ; which perpetually disquiet and torment him, so as he hath no enjoyment of himself, nor of any thing that he hath.

*Use 2.* This should excite us to labour to subdue and mortify this pernicious and pestilent evil ; to get our hearts taken off  
from



from the world, and our love and affection to it every day more abated and lessened. And there are many considerations that may be of use to abate our esteem of the world, and cure the excess of our love, and the inordinacy of our affections to it. As, namely,

1. The Consideration of the mutability and inconstancy of all Earthly things. Our own lamentable experience hath sufficiently taught us the uncertainty of these things, and how suddenly they take them wings and flee away, when we think we have such fast hold of them, as we cannot easily be deprived of them.

2. While we can keep them, they are empty things that have not that in them which they promised. They bring us in no sound content and satisfaction; they cannot in any measure answer the desires, and fill up the large capacity of an immortal Soul; and this consideration also should abate our love and affections to them.

3. They are not only empty and unsatisfying, but disquieting and vexatious things. He that greedily covets them, and eagerly pursues them, shall find that he pierceth himself through with many sorrows; as the Apostle speaks, *1 Tim 6. 10.*

4. The more a man hath of them, the more difficult will his account be; for to  
whom

*whom much hath been given, of him shall much be required, Luke 12. 48.*

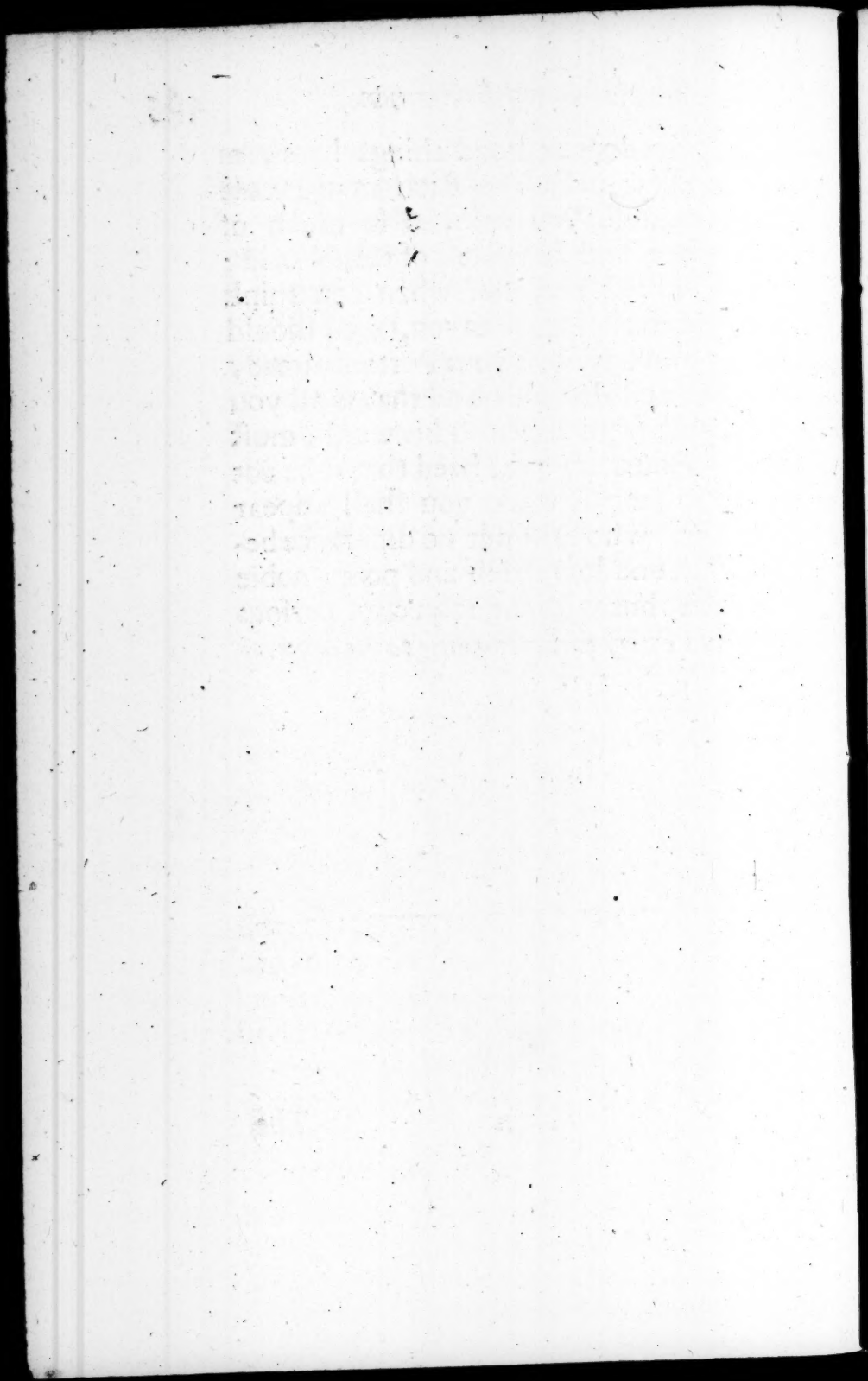
5. The more a man hath of this world, the more he is incumbred and retarded in his way to Heaven, and with the greater difficulty he gets thither. Hence was that severe Speech of our Saviour, (for so worldly-minded persons are apt to judge of it) Mat. 19. 24 *It is easier for a Camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.*

6. The more a man hath of this World, the more grievous will his punishments be in another World, if he shall abuse what God hath so plentifully heaped on him, and lose Heaven at last. The Torments of Hell shall be proportioned to wicked mens enjoyments here; according to that threatning denounced against *Babylon*, Revel. 18. 7. *How much she hath glorified her self, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her.*

To Conclude ; Make use of these Considerations to cool and allay your affections to the World ; and if you have little, be so much the better contented with that little which God hath allotted you ; and if you have much, be so much the more watchful over your self, lest the World ingross all your love, and make you undervalue and neglect the true riches, without which you will be for ever miserable hereafter, and the more miserable because you have

have received your good things here, as *Abraham* said unto the Rich man, *Luke* 16. 25. because you enjoyed so much of the pleasures and happiness of this World; O be afraid lest hereafter when you think to be admitted into Heaven, God should tell you, You have had your Portion already in this life, and abused it, and that is all you must expect from him. This were a most dreadful Sentence; take heed that it be not your lot to hear it when you shall appear before him, who will put no difference between high and low, rich and poor, noble and ignoble, but without respect of persons render unto every man according to his works.

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## The Fourteenth Sermon.

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M A T T H. IV. 9.

*And he saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.*

**T**HUS I have done with what was Preparatory to the Temptation. Now followeth the Temptation it self, in the Ninth Verse: *And he saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.* St. Luke expresth this more fully, adding, That the Devil said moreover, All this is delivered me, and unto whomsoever I will, I give it; or to that purpose

And here, 1. We may observe the Devil's most impudent Lying. The Word of God, which is of infallible Truth, affirmeth, That the Kingdoms of the World are in God's disposal, and that he giveth them to whomsoever he pleaseth. That God putteth down one, and setteth up another, Ps. 75. 7. But the Devil saith, That all the King-

H h 2

doms



doms of the World and the glory of them are his, and he disposeth of them as he pleaseth. The Devil is a Lyar, and the Father of it, as he who is Truth it self testifieth concerning him, *John* 8. 44. The Devil told the first Lye that ever was told. This Deceiver told our First Parents, That their eating of the forbidden fruit should be no prejudice, but a great advantage to them. God had threatned them, that in the day in which they should eat thereof, they should surely dye; that is, they should dye spiritually, and also be immediately subject to Death Corporal and Eternal; but the Devil told them they should not dye, but become like *God's*, *knowing good and evil*, *Gen.* 3. 4, 5. This practice of Lying the Devil hath ever since used himself, and taught others to use it; and upon all occasions tempted and instigated them thereunto. By long practice he is become perfectly acquainted with the art of Lying, and all the secrets and mysteries thereof. This wicked Art he continually exerciseth and practiseth many ways.

As, 1. By enticing men to sin by fallacious and lying promises of that content and satisfaction thereby, which they shall never have. Thus he deluded our First Parents.

2. By persuading wicked men, who are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity, that their spiritual Estate is good,

good, and that they are in a safe condition.

3. By endeavouring on the contrary to make good men believe that their Estate is dangerous, and unsafe ; that they are under the Wrath and Curse of God ; that he may hereby deject them , discourage and terrify them.

4. By persuading Sinners who begin to have a sense of their sin and misery, That there is no mercy for them , and that 'tis in vain for them to seek the pardon of their sins , or to do any thing in order to the making their peace with God.

5. By instilling into the minds of men false Doctrines, dangerous Opinions, pernicious Errors and Heresies, and by imposing them on them for Divine Truths.

6. By endeavouring to infect and poison the Souls of men with Principles of Atheism and Irreligion ; g them there is no God, no Judgment to come, no Heaven, no Hell : That there are neither Rewards nor Punishments in another World : That the Souls of men are not Immortal : That there is no difference after Death between a Man and a Beast : That there is no Truth in Divine Promises and Threatnings : That the Scriptures are not the Word of God ; and that the Doctrine of the Gospel is but a Fable. These Blasphemous and Atheistical Tenets, not to

be mentioned without abhorrence and detestation, doth the Devil, the Father of Lyes, endeavour to possess the minds of men withal.

7. By teaching and tempting men of wicked and ungodly Opinions to deceive others, and seduce them, and to turn them aside from the Truth unto Fables. Upon this account it is (as some Divines conceive) that false Doctrines and Heresies, are called Doctrines of Devils, *1 Tim. 4. 11.* The Devil, that seducing and lying Spirit, being the Author and Fomenter, the Broacher and Propagator of them.

8. By helping his wicked Instruments to make use of false and lying Miracles for the more effectual deluding and seducing of others. Hence it is that the Apostle saith, the coming of Antichrist to deceive the World, and to draw men off from the Truth, should be after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, *2 Thess. 2. 9.* So then, false signs and lying wonders, are the Artifices which Satan by his instruments makes use of to cheat the World. Hence also 'tis that we read *Rev. 13. 14.* that the Beast which had Horns like a Lamb, and spake as a Dragon, that is the *Roman* Antichrist, (for so he is described) deceived them that dwell on the Earth, by the means of those Miracles  
which

which he had power to do. And then afterwards, *Rev.* 16. 13, 14 We read again of Three unclean Spirits coming out of the mouth of the Dragon, and out of the mouth of the Beast, and out of the mouth of the false Prophet, which are the Spirits of Devils working Miracles. Here the seeming Miracles which are wrought by Antichrist and his Adherents, are ascribed to the Devil. For 'tis the Devil, the Father of Lyes, that teacheth and instigateth them by their juggling tricks to deceive the World; and the Devil in all probability sometimes assists them also to do strange things that look like Miracles, and are taken for true Miracles by ignorant and superstitious people.

9. The Devil carries on his practice of Lying, by teaching and instigating men of seared Consciences to make use of Lying Equivocations, and Mental reservations, to keep themselves out of danger, to exempt themselves from those punishments which by their Misdemeanors they have deserved, and to keep up and maintain the Credit and Reputation of their Party. That Equivocations are the Devil's own Artifices, is evident. Did not this Lyar equivocate when he assaulted *Eve*, telling her, That by eating of the forbidden Fruit, they should have the knowledge of good and evil? His own meaning which he re-

served to himself was , That they should have , nor the comfortable knowledge of good and evil, but the sad, miserable, experimental knowledge of the evil of sin, guilt, and punishment ; of the loss of God's Favour , and of the woful effects of his Displeasure. In a word, They should know by lamentable experience, both how great the good was , which by violating the Commandment of God they had lost, and how great the evils were which they had thereby produced to themselves. This, I say , was the meaning which the false, lying, equivocating spirit reserved to himself ; but in the mean time he so express'd himself, and so carri'd the matter, as they might understand their condition should be much better'd and advanc'd by a most comfortable and desirable, a most Divine and Excellent knowledge which they should attain as soon as they should have tasted of the forbidden Fruit. By this instance we see who was the Father of equivocations , even he who is the Father of Lies. And we may see also how ancient equivocating was ; the Devil made use of this cheating Artifice in the first temptation with which he assaulted Mankind. And the same wicked Art he used when he would prevail with *Ahab* to go up to *Ramoth Gilead* to Battel ; 1 *Kings* 22. 22. when a wicked Spirit had offered himself

to



to persuade *Ahab*, that he might go up to *Ramoth Gilead* and fall; and the Lord had demanded of him how he would persuade him; *I will*, saith he, *go forth and be a lying spirit in the mouths of his Prophets.* That which the Devil himself calls a lying Spirit, and that which the Prophet *Michaiah* afterwards so calleth, saying, *Behold the Lord hath put a lying spirit into the mouth of thy Prophets*, v. 23. was an equivocating Spirit. For the Answer which the Devil had put into the mouths of *Ahab's* false Prophets was, *Go up, for the Lord hath delivered it into the hand of the King.* In which subtil and ambiguous Speech he neither expresth what the Lord would deliver, neither into the hands of what King: So that the thing to be delivered into the hands of the King might be either the Army of *Israel*, or the City of *Ramoth Gilead*. If the words were understood of the Army of *Israel* to be deliver'd, then by the King must be understood the King of *Syria*, as indeed it fell out; for the King of *Syria* getting the Victory, the Army of *Ahab* was delivered into his hands. But if *Ramoth Gilead* was to be delivered into the hand of the King, then by the King must *Ahab* the King of *Israel* be understood, who should recover that City out of the hands of the King of *Syria*. And thus *Ahab* understood it, and so was encouraged  
to

to go up to *Ramoth Gilead*, making sure account that he should gain it ; but instead of regaining *Ramoth Gilead*, he lost his Army , and his own life also. Thus the Devil cheated him, and trepann'd him to his ruin.

Now what hath been said concerning the Devil's Lying and Equivocation, should make us hate all manner of lying and falshood with a perfect hatred , and this as we would not imitate and resemble the Devil , whose Children they are , and whose likeness and image they bear who addict themselves to this sin. Neither may any man think that equivocating is in the least more excusable than a plain or flat lye. For though it be artificially framed to cover the evil and deformity of it, and to prevent the discovery , and also the suspicion of falsehood ; yet 'tis a lye , and no better ; yea, 'tis the worst sort of lyes, it being so much the more sinful, because there is so much Artifice and Contrivance in it ; and it being so much the more dangerous because it is so cunningly framed as that the Hearer may neither so much as suspect the falshood that lies under it , nor the prejudice thereby intended. Whatever any of us may think of Equivocation, how favourable soever our thoughts of it may be, the Prophet *Michaiah*, as we have seen, called an Equivocating Spirit, a lying Spirit, and

and the Devil himself called it by no better name. It were well if all they would seriously consider this, who though they seem to make some Conscience of uttering a plain and downright lye, yet make no Conscience at all of an artificial lye, that is, of Equivocation; they stick not at saying one thing, and meaning another, so long as they can make out a true sense to themselves by the help of some secret reservation in their own minds. A deceitful Art so common, and so much in use with many, that you know not where to have them, or how far you may believe them in any thing which they either affirm or deny. For, how plain and express soever their words are, they may (according to their usual practice) have a reserve to themselves, which added to what they utter, makes up a sense directly contrary to what is expressed, and to what their words plainly import and signify. They will say, 'tis no lye however in their sense. But let me ask all such as indulge themselves in such juggling, when they utter any thing, Do they speak to themselves, or others? Are not Words and Language made use of to signify and impart to others what our sense and meaning, our apprehensions and conceptions are? But how is this honestly and truly done, when a man shall purposely order and frame his words so as the Hearer may  
take

take them in a sense that is not true? Doth the Speaker save himself from making a lye, by reserving something in his own mind which the Hearer must not know, and which being added to what is exprest, makes up a true sense to himself? To give an Instance or two hereof. *Gehazi* goes after *Naaman* the Syrian in the name of the Prophet his Master, to obtain a Talent of Gold, and a *Babylonish* Garment. Being afterwards asked by his Master where he had been, he answers, *Thy Servant went no whither*. Now what if this wicked Servant had said he went no where with this secret reservation, that he went no where upon his head, or that he went no where with an intent never to return; or that he went no where to make himself away, or to offer any violence to himself; had this secret reservation saved *Gehazi* from having told a lye to his Master?

So if *Ananias* and *Sapphira*, *Acts* 5. saying they had sold their Land for so much, should have reserved this to themselves, That they sold it for so much, and as much more as they could get for it; would this have excused them from lying? No such matter; they had lyed to the Holy Ghost however; neither would such an artifice have absolved them from it. Wherefore let us all take heed how we mock God, and delude our own Souls by any such kind of *Le-gerdemain*;

*gerdemain* ; Let us hate and abhor lying in every kind , and let it be an abomination to us, as it is unto the Lord. And let us hate and abhor equivocating as much as any other lye whatsoever : So shall we thus far at least approve our selves to be the Children of the God of truth. Let no man think that an Equivocation shall secure him from being condemned together with all other Lyars, unto the Lake that burneth with Fire and Brimstone. Such Tricks and fraudulent Artifices shall serve no man's turn when he comes to stand before the Judgment-Seat of Christ, and to be examined and sentenced by him who searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins. And thus I have spoken of the Devil's Lying.

2. In the next place we may observe the Devil's Boasting. He vauntingly and vapouringly tells our Saviour, what great things he had to bestow ; That all the Kingdoms of the World, and all the Glory of them were at his disposal, and that he could give them to whomsoever he pleased. Thus he most impudently boasted, though he knew he had not one foot thereof to dispose of. Here Boasting and Lying meet in what he assumes to himself, as indeed frequently they do. A great Boaster is for the most part as great a Lyar. They who take delight in speaking much of themselves, and of their own things, will often be tempted to exceed



exceed the bounds of Truth, as well as of Modesty. A sinful vanity which every true Christian should so much the more hate, and the more carefully and studiously avoid; because as in Lying and Equivocating, so in Boasting also men resemble the Devil.

I might here add several Considerations for alienating our hearts from this vanity, and for making us out of love with it. But having elsewhere enlarged on this Subject; I shall in this place pursue it no further.

And so much may suffice to have been spoken concerning the Devil's Boasting, and the care we should have that we do not imitate and resemble him therein.

3. Another thing which we may here observe, is the largeness of the Devil's proffers, when he would draw men into sin. He here tempts our Saviour to fall down and worship him, with the promise of all the Kingdoms of the World, and the glory of them. Thus his usual practice is to lay before men the many and great advantages which sin will be attended with; the profits and emoluments, the delight and pleasure; the content and satisfaction which it will afford the sinner. But in the mean time he never represents the incomparably greater losses and damages inseparably attending it without repentance; the loss of God's favour, of the peace

peace of a man's Conscience , and of the Soul it self, for the loss whereof the gain of the whole World cannot make amends, *Mat. 16. 26.* He never represents the Gall and Wormwood , the Anguish and Bitterness , the Horror and Amazement , the Everlasting Wo and Misery that follow sin at their heels. Wherefore let us all be so well advised for our good , as not to believe the Devil's proffers , or yield to his solicitations by what promises soever they may be seconded and enforced. Let us remember that the Devil is an old Cheater, that hath no other design in his most specious proffers and largest promises, than to beguile us of our Souls, and make us eternally miserable.

Now follows our Saviour's Reply to this Temptation. *Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan ; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God , and him only shalt thou serve.* Here two things offer themselves to our consideration , the detestation which Christ expresseth against the Devil's temptation , and then his answer to it. His detestation is expressed in the first words, *Get thee hence, Satan.* We do not find that Christ expressed the like detestation in his Replies to either of the two former temptations. There he contented himself to have made a Reply to the temptations out of Scripture , without any  
such

such severe language as here. The reasons hereof may be these.

1. The Devil had once and again been so fully answered and confuted, as he had not one word to Reply ; and yet he most impudently and obstinately perseveres in his malicious attempts, and comes on yet once more to make a third assault upon our Saviour. When therefore Christ saw his impudence and importunity to be such, as sound Answers and substantial Replies would not quell him and beat him off, he severely rebukes him, and commands him to be gone. And this may teach us how we ought to carry our selves when Satan will not cease to molest us, and pursue us still with fresh assaults, notwithstanding all the resistance that hath been made against him ; in such cases, though we cannot command him to be gone, as Christ did ; yet we must be as obstinate and peremptory in resisting him as he is in assaulting us ; and with the greater violence he reneweth his temptations, with so much the greater resolution and courage must we oppose and withstand him. By such constant and vigorous resistance, we in effect say, Get thee hence, Satan ; we shew our utter detestation of him and his temptations, and leave him small hopes of ever gaining the Victory over us. And hereunto we must add our  
most

most fervent Prayers unto God, that he would be pleased to rebuke him sharply, and command him away from us, though we cannot.

2. The Honour of God was struck at in this temptation more directly and immediately; and this was it that made Christ express so much detestation of it. To give Divine Worship to a Creature, to the Devil himself, the avowed Enemy of God, and the worst of all his Creatures, (for such by his sin he had made himself) this was a thing so highly derogatory to the Honour of God, and upon that account so much to be detested and abhorred, that when the Tempter proceeded so far, our Saviour thought it not fit to treat him as before, but to take him up more roundly, and rebuke him severely: His impudence, sauciness, and obstinacy was now to be entertained with *A Get thee hence, Satan*, and pierce mine ears no more with such hideous, such horrid, and execrable Blasphemies. And herein also, as in other things, hath Christ set us a pattern for our imitation. We hence learn to shew special indignation against those sins by which, above others, the Honour of God is most affronted. Our calmness and moderation in such cases, argues our want of zeal for God, and want of a due sense of the indignities that are offered unto his name. When

*Hezekiah* heard the report of the Blasphemies which *Rabshakeb* uttered against the Lord, he rent his Clothes, and put on Sackloth, 2 *Kings* 19. 1. And yet how many of us can hear Cursing, and Swearing, and Blaspheming, and whatever is most highly dishonourable to the name of God, tamely and patiently, without any discovery of our indignation against it! How many of us can in the most friendly and familiar manner converse with such profligate and Atheistical people, and take pleasure in their Company! The delight men take in their Society at the Alehouse or Tavern, reconciles them to all these detestable things; and if they do not join with them therein, yet at most they do but laugh at them, as if they rather took some content in such execrable language, than abhorr'd it. But to say no more of these persons, few of whom, perhaps, may be now within hearing (for such for the most part seldom come within these Walls): Let us come nearer home, and reflect upon our selves. Who is there amongst us all that hath attained such a measure of zeal for God, and such a sense of the dishonours done to his Name, as is required of us, and ought to be found in us? If there be in us any true zeal for God's glory, any sense of God's honour or dishonour; Oh how little is it! How doth every small thing quench  
or



or damp it ! When we should boldly and courageously reprove the daring provocations of men who set their mouths against Heaven, and shew our detestation of their horrible sin, How often doth the fear of the face of man that shall dye, and of the Son of man that shall be made as Grass, so rebate and cool our zeal, or rather so quench and extinguish it, as that we have not one word to say for God ! This base and cowardly spirit, where the Honour of God is concerned, is highly blameworthy in private persons, but much more is it so in persons that are in place of Power, and that are intrusted with the Administration of Justice. Magistrates are obliged to shew their detestation of these sins, and more especially of Blasphemy, not only by re-proving the Offenders, but also by punishing them with all that severity which is according to Law. If a man speak against an Earthly Prince, it shall cost him dear ; how much more should it, when men shall dare to speak against the Great God, who is King of kings, and Lord of lords ! By the Law of God the Blasphemer was to be put to death, *Levit. 24. 14.* And I know no reason why we under the Gospel should not be as tender of the Honour of God, and as zealous for the vindication of it, as the Ancient Church of God before the coming of Christ was obliged to be.

There is yet one thing more which these words of our Saviour, *Get thee hence, Satan*, may teach us; namely, what averſation from, and abhorrence of the practices of ſeducers we ought to ſhew ; I mean of all ſuch as endeavour to draw us off from God, from thoſe ways of his Worſhip that are agreeable to his Word, or from the true Religion. When once the Devil attempted to induce Chriſt to give that Worſhip to himſelf which is due to God alone, he would have no more to do with him, but immediately charged him to get him going. And thus ſhould we carry our ſelves towards all ſeducers that would draw us off from the Truth, and eſpecially that would entice us to Idolatry. As ſoon as we perceive this ſpirit of ſeduction to be in any perſon, as ſoon as we take notice that the deſign of any perſon is to inſtil into us the poiſon of Heresy or Error, to pervert us, and turn us aſide from the Truth, to draw us off from the true Religion, and thoſe right ways of God's Worſhip that are preſcribed in the Word, we muſt with an holy indignation caſt them off, and withdraw from them.

How great and how impartial was the ſeverity which God required ſhould be ſhewed to perſons of ſuch dangerous practices under the Law ! *If thy brother, the ſon of thy mother, or thy ſon or thy daughter,*  
or

*or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend which is as thine own Soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods ; thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him ; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him : but thou shalt surely kill him, thine hand shall be upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people ; and thou shalt stone him with stones till he dye : because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the Lord thy God, Deut. 13. 6, 8, 9, 10.*

Now though it be true, that the like severity is not to be used in all cases against Seducers ; yet it hence appears, how heinous the sin of such pestilent instruments is, how dangerous and pernicious their practices are, how much their Society is to be shunned and avoided, and with what detestation they must disclaim them, and turn away from them, who have either any true zeal for God, for his Truth, and the pure ways of his Worship, or any love for their own Souls, and care of their eternal welfare. Hence is that strict and severe charge of St. John, Epist. 2. 10. *If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, that is, the Doctrine of Christ mentioned in the Verse before, receive him not into your house, nor bid him God speed ; for he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds.* If all Seducers were thus

treated and dealt with, we should be less troubled with them, neither would such Multitudes be drawn off from the truth, and turned aside after fables by the pernicious solicitations, and subtil insinuations of those, who treading in the footsteps of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, compass Sea and Land that they may make one Profelyte; and when he is made, they make him twofold more the Child of Hell than themselves, *Matth.* 23. 15. But while such wicked instruments have such encouragements amongst us, as long as so much kindness is shew'd them, as long as men gladly embrace intimate acquaintance and familiarity with them, open the Doors of their Houses to them, and bid them welcome, and open their hearts as well as their ears to their dangerous Insinuations, pernicious Principles, and false Doctrines, it is not to be wondered at that so many in all places almost throughout the Nation should be tainted, infected, poisoned, and perverted by them: That such swarms of Papists, Quakers, Seekers, Ranters, Deists, Atheists, and what not, should as so many Locusts overspread the Land. A most sad and dismal face of things! that can never be sufficiently lamented and bewailed; and which threatens us with sorer Judgments than any of those which we have hitherto felt, and had experience of. The Lord in mercy avert those

those evils from us which hang over our heads, that our most just fears may never come upon us, or overtake us.

So from our Saviour's detestation of Satan's temptation, I go on to his Answer thereunto ; *It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve* ; which Testimony is alledged out of *Deut. 6. 13*. In which place, though there be some difference in the words , yet the sense is the same with what our Saviour here expresseth. Here our Saviour's words are, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God* ; whereas there 'tis said, *Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God* : But external Worship, prostration of the Body, or Religious Adoration, being an expression or signification of the inward fear, reverence, and devotion of the heart, the same Scripture which requires the one to be given to God, requires the other also to be given to him. And whereas our Saviour saith, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve* ; though the word *only* be not expressed in *Deuteronomy*, yet is there no variation of the sense, or corruption of the Text in our Saviour's allegation. For in the very next Verse God forbids his people to go after other Gods, which plainly shews that the meaning of the former Verse, is, That the true God, and he only is to be worshipped and served. Now hence



may several things be profitably and usefully inferred.

As, 1. That there is no reason why we should be offended or stumble at the practice of the Penmen of the New Testament, who frequently alledge passages out of the Old Testament in other words than are there read. Though they use this liberty, yet as long as they retain the true sense of those places, (which they ever do), there is no misallegation or abuse of those Scriptures. Yea, 'tis many times a great advantage to us that they keep to the sense, rather than to the words; for thereby in alledging those Scriptures, they expound them to us, and give us the true scope and meaning of them. In short, they herein do no otherwise than Christ himself had done before them, who in his allegation of Scriptures, had sometimes more respect to the sense, than to the words.

2. This furnisheth us with an Answer to those, whether Anabaptists or others, who in several points call for the very Letter of the Scripture to make good what we affirm or deny, and will admit of nothing as a sufficient proof, unless the thing to be proved may in so many words or express terms be found in Scripture. What if the Baptism of Infants, or the Observation of the Lord's day, should not in express terms be found in Scripture? Is it not sufficient

cient that there are those Scriptures to be alleged, from whence those truths may be clearly inferred, and substantially proved? The Resurrection of the Dead is a great and weighty point : And yet how did our Saviour prove it out of the Old Testament? Surely not by alledging any exprefs Text for it, in which it was in so many words affirmed, but by producing a Scripture from whence the Resurrection might be evidently collected and deduced. *As touching the resurrection of the dead, saith he, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob : God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, Matth. 22. 31, 32. In St. Luke Chapter 20. 38. Our Saviour adds, For all live to him.* Which must be understood not barely of the Soul, but of the whole man ; and so *Abraham* though dead, lives to God, not only in respect of his power to raise him up from death, but also in respect of his Will and Purpose to raise him. But if there were no Resurrection of the Dead, and *Abraham's* person were neither at present in being, nor ever should be any more (and so for *Isaac* and *Jacob*) how could God be said to be his or their God?

3. Hence we may learn, Not to stick too much in the bare Letter of the Holy Scriptures, but to labour principally to acquaint  
our

our selves with the true sence of them. The Scripture lies not in Words, Syllables, and Letters, but in the sence and things signified. He hath the Scriptures that hath the sence and truths contained in the Scriptures. Mens resting too much in the meer Letter of the Scriptures, hath been an occasion of many gross mistakes, and some foul and dangerous errors in Matters of Religion. A great instance whereof we have in the Papists and *Lutherans*, who precisely adhering to the Letter or literal sence of those words, *This is my Body*, have introduced and brought into the Church those monstrous and prodigious Doctrines of Transubstantiation, and Consubstantiation. These irrational and senseless opinions had never disturbed the peace of the Church, if men had not more heeded the Letter of the Scriptures, than the sence. But yet here we must be cautioned, Not to wave the literal sence, unless there be just cause for so doing, and the literal sence be not agreeable to the Analogy of Faith, or consonant to the Dictates of right Reason. Causlessly to depart from the literal sence, and with *Origen* to turn the plainest Scriptures into abstruse Allegories, were to run into another extreme on the other hand no less dangerous.

Now whereas our Saviour in all his Replies to Satan, ever insists on Scripture, and alledgeth

alledged what is therein written; we hence learn with what weapons Satan, and all Heretical and Erroneous persons are to be encountred. Our chief defence against them all, lies in the Holy Scriptures; out of God's Armory our weapons of War for managing this spiritual Conflict must be taken. As long as we stick to the Holy Scriptures, and keep us close to them, we are safe. But of this I have formerly spoken upon occasion of Christ's Replies to the former temptations.

As to the matter of Christ's Reply to this temptation, we see nothing could be alledged more suitable to our Saviour's purpose, and more fit to be opposed against Satan's temptation. 'Tis not meerly the alledging of Scriptures, but the alledging of proper and pertinent Scriptures, that will do our business, and stand us in stead when we are engaged to encounter with Satan and his Instruments. It concerns us therefore to be well versed in Scripture, and to have the true sense of Scripture, and to know how to manage and apply it fitly and pertinently, if we would put Satan and his Agents to flight. Here the great truth out of Scripture which Christ opposeth to the temptation of the Devil, is, That God only is to be Worshipped and Served; he means with that Divine and Religious Worship which Satan intended when he tempted

tempted him to fall down and worship him. That this was the worship which the Devil aimed at, and was ambitious of, is evident from our Saviour's Reply. But as for Civil worship and reverence, that may be given to the Creatures : Yea, men may expect it, and 'tis due to them according to their places, and according to the pre-eminencies, gifts, graces, and endowments which God hath conferred on them, and dignified them with. Now if it be here demanded, What that Divine Homage and Religious Worship is that is proper and peculiar to God, and cannot without Idolatry be given to any Creature ? I Answer, There are several kinds of it. In general, 'tis all that homage, service, and worship, whereby we testify our subjection to God as the supreme good, and our acknowledgment of our dependance on him, as him in whom we live, move, and have our being here, and from whom we hope to be made partakers of everlasting bliss and happiness hereafter. This Religious Worship appropriated to God, is either internal, or external.

1. Internal, when in our hearts we own him, and him only as God ; when we have an high esteem and veneration for him, as for one that is infinitely above all the Creatures visible and invisible, and that hath all imaginable perfections essential to him ;  
when



when we love him with a superlative love; when we trust in him, rely on him, have all our expectations from him; when we have none in Heaven but him, and none in all the Earth in comparison of him.

2. External; when by those outward acts of service and worship that are proper to God, and only applicable to the Divine Nature, we testify and declare how we esteem him, reverence him, and stand affected towards him in our hearts. Now this may be done divers ways.

1. It was done of the people of God in the Old Testament, according to the ways of Divine Worship then in use; by building Altars, and offering Sacrifices, and making solemn Vows unto God.

2. Men may testify the high Veneration and Honour they have for God; by building Temples or Churches, and Consecrating them to his Honour and Service.

3. By offering up their Prayers and Supplications to him, and having recourse to him for succour and relief in all their distresses, as unto one who alone is able to help them.

4. By an humble and thankful acknowledgment of him in the favours and mercies which they receive from him, and by rendering unto him the praises that are due to him for them.

5. By an humble confession of their sins, and of their utter unworthiness to find any grace in his eyes, or to obtain any good thing from him.

6. By corporal adoration, by prostrating their bodies before him, or kneeling to him, as to the Supreme Governor of the World, and the Author of their being and well-being.

7. By sincere and universal Obedience to all his Commands, and a meek, patient, and humble submission to all his Providences. This last particular, namely, our sincere and universal Obedience to the Commands of God; and our meek, patient, and humble submission to his Providences, is not, I confess, usually reckoned among the several parts or kinds of Religious Worship; but yet the Apostle calls it by the name of a Sacrifice; *I beseech you by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living Sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service*, Rom.

12. 1. And indeed it is of all Sacrifices the most acceptable to God; and that whereby we most really own his supremacy and sovereignty over us. But in regard

gard that by Religious Worship we ordinarily understand, devout kneeling, or prostrating the body before God, the offering up of prayers and praises to him, and the like; therefore with relation to those especially shall I at present speak. Now that such Religious Worship is due unto God alone, and cannot without great impiety be given to any Creature, is evident, as from this, so likewise from other Scriptures, and from Reason it self, and from the very nature of the thing.

1. From other Scriptures. Certainly if Religious Worship might be given to any of the Creatures, then might it be given to the most excellent of all the Creatures, and to such of them as in respect of the high dignity of their nature, and their eminent perfections, come nearest unto God himself; such as are the blessed Angels. But the Scripture is plainly and expressly against the giving of religious Worship to those excellent and glorious spirits. The Apostle St. Paul, *Coloss. 2. 18.* in plain terms condemns the Worshipping of Angels. And when St. John, *Rev. 22. 8, 9.* fell down to worship before the feet of the Angel that had shewed him the things before mentioned, the Angel forbids him, saying unto him, *Do it not, for I am thy fellow-servant,*  
and

*and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them that keep the sayings of this book : Worship God.*

Here, (1.) The Angel doth not only refuse to be Worshipped, but gives such a reason for his refusal thereof, as makes all Creatures whatsoever incapable of being Worshipped, *I am thy fellow-servant*, saith he; the Angel, how excellent a Creature soever, being but a Creature, and on that account a fellow-Servant with St. John, must not be worshipped.

(2.) The Angel directs him to the true and only object of Religious Adoration; *Worship God*. As if he had said, God alone is to be Worshipped, and therefore give Religious Worship to him, and to none beside him.

2. That Religious Worship cannot without great impiety be given to any Creature, is further evident from Reason, and from the very nature of the thing. For by giving Religious Worship to any thing, we own it to be the supreme Governor of the World, the Author of our Being, and of whatsoever good things we here enjoy; and we own it for the Author of our Eternal Happiness  
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in another World. Now how can any Creature be thus owned, without the highest injury to his Honour, who saith, *I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another?* Isa. 42. 8.

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## The Fifteenth Sermon.

M A T T H. IV. 9.

*And he saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.*

**F**R O M what hath been said concerning this point, several things may be inferred.

1. We may hence infer, How foully and dangerously the Church of Rome errs, whose Doctrine and Practice in this matter is most opposite to the Scriptures, and most derogatory to the Honour of God. For they teach, (and practice accordingly) that Prayers are to be made unto Saints and Angels; That the Host or Consecrated Bread in the Eucharist or Sacrament is to be worshipped: They teach and defend the lawfulness of making Vows to Saints, and the Adoration of Holy Relicks. Thus they rob God of that Honour which peculiarly belongs unto him, and bestow it upon the

Creatures. For these their impious practices, at least for some of them, they have by many Learned men been charged with Idolatry, as gross Idolatry as that which was found among the Heathen; from which heavy charge they have never yet been able sufficiently to free themselves by all their nice distinctions and subtilties.

2. We may hence infer, How necessary, and every way justifiable, our departure from the Church of *Rome* was, and how unjustly they charge us with Schism upon that account. If we had still continued with them, and professedly held Communion with that Corrupt and Apostatical Church, we must either have been guilty of Idolatry, or Hypocrisy; of Idolatry, if we had really owned and heartily closed with all the corruptions of that Church in Doctrine and Worship; or of Hypocrisy, most gross and palpable Hypocrisy, if externally professing to own and approve of their corruptions and superstitions, we had secretly disowned and disclaimed them in our hearts. Under these difficult circumstances; What could we safely and with a good Conscience do, but separate our selves from them, and renounce Communion with them? And here we may appeal to all unprejudiced persons to judge between us; who are guilty of Schism, whether we who were necessitated and enforced to  
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withdraw from them, or they who drove us out of their Communion, and compelled us to leave them, by imposing those things upon us as necessary and indispensable terms and conditions of our Communion with them, which we could not without sin assent unto, and admit of. The case is plain, they are the Schismatics who made the breach, and caused the separation; and this did they, and not we.

3. We may also hence infer, how great a mercy 'tis, and with how much thankfulness to be acknowledged, that we are at liberty; that our Church is purged from the Corruptions of that unsound and diseased Church; and that we are delivered from those snares in which our Consciences must have been intangled, and from all that guilt which we must inevitably have contracted and lain under, if we had still continued to hold Communion with it. O may we never either by our unthankfulness for so great a deliverance, or by the unanswerableness of our lives to the liberties and privileges which we of the Protestant Religion enjoy, provoke God to suffer us again to be brought under that heavy Yoke of worse than *Egyptian* Bondage. And may all the destructive Counsels of wicked *Achitophels* that would again enthral us, ever prove unsuccessful and abortive, as through the unspeakable

Creatures. For these their impious practices, at least for some of them, they have by many Learned men been charged with Idolatry, as gross Idolatry as that which was found among the Heathen; from which heavy charge they have never yet been able sufficiently to free themselves by all their nice distinctions and subtilties.

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Goodness of God they have hitherto been.

But after all this, it will here be said, That we injure them in misrepresenting both their Doctrine and Worship. The principal instances from whence we would fasten the heavy charge of Idolatry upon them, are these Three; Their Worshipping the Host, as they call it, or the Consecrated Bread in the Sacrament: Their Worshipping Images, and their praying unto Saints and Angels. Now they think they have enough to say for their justification in reference to all these, and for absolving themselves from the charge of Idolatry. As to the first, their Worshipping the Host or Consecrated Bread in the Sacrament, They say, that they holding the Doctrine of Transubstantiation, verily believe that, after the Consecration of the Elements of Bread and Wine, the bread is really turned into the body of Christ, and the wine into his blood, and so they worship not the bread, but the body of Christ, or Christ, who being God, is the proper Object of Divine Worship. To this we answer, That this doth not at all free them from the charge of Idolatry. They fancy that the Consecrated Elements are turned into the body and blood of Christ; but we believe and know the contrary. We believe and know that the Doctrine of Transubstantiation

stantiation is the most senseless, gross, and monstrous error that ever infested the Church of Christ, as being full of so many plain contradictions and absurdities, that 'tis to be admired that any man indued with the faculty of Reason, should ever embrace it. We believe and know the Elements of Bread and Wine to be still Bread and Wine after the Consecration as well as before, and that the Consecration only alters the use, and not the nature of them: And they being the same in nature still, we know the Bread Consecrated can no more be the Object of Adoration or Divine Worship, than any other Bread. Now if they strongly fancy the Bread after Consecration to be turned into the Body of Christ, and that Body to be Hypostatically or Personally united to the Divine Nature or Godhead of Christ, may they hereupon fall down and worship it, and not be guilty of Idolatry? Then by the same reason, if they strongly fancied any other Creature to be God, they might lawfully fall down and worship it, and there would be no Idolatry therein. If this were true, then might the most gross Idolatry of the Heathens be defended. The Heathens believed the Sun and Moon to be Gods, and Worshipped them as such. Did their fancying or believing those Creatures to be Gods, free them from the guilt of

Idolatry in Worshipping them? If so, then why doth God by the Prophet charge the *Jews* with Idolatry, because in imitation of the Heathen, they offered Cakes to the Queen of Heaven, for so they called the Moon, *Jer.* 7. 18. and because they burned incense to her, and poured out drink-offerings before her, *Jer.* 44. 17. If there were no Idolatry in Worshipping a meer Creature, if we do but strongly fancy or believe it to be God, then why might not the *Egyptians* be excused from Idolatry who Worshipped Leeks and Onions, because they believed them to be Gods? This is so plain, and the Light of the Truth on our side so clear and convincing, that divers of their own Learned men have acknowledged, That if the Doctrine of Transubstantiation should be an error, and there should be no Conversion of the Consecrated Elements of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, the Church of *Rome* would be guilty of Idolatry; one of them, *Costerus* by name, saith, they would be as gross Idolaters as the Heathens.

The 2<sup>d</sup> Instance of the Idolatry which we charge them with, is their Worshipping of Images, which we say is expressly forbidden in the Second Commandment. But here in Vindication of their Doctrine and Worship, they make use of several Pleas,

I. They

1. They say, that they Worship not the Image, but God by the Image; so as their Worship is not terminated in the Image it self, but in God who is represented by it.

2. That the Images forbidden in the Second Commandment, are only the Images of false Gods, or Idol Gods, and not the Images of the true God.

3. That the Images by which any man should intend to represent God perfectly, are forbidden, and none else.

4. That though Images were forbidden to the *Jews*, in regard of their proneness to Idolatry, yet they are not forbidden to us Christians. These are the principal shifts which they have recourse unto for the justification of themselves. It would be very long and tedious to speak to all these largely and fully. A few words therefore to them in order as I have mentioned them.

1. They say they Worship not the Image, but God by the Image, so as their Worship is not terminated in the Image it self, but in God who is represented by it.

A. To this I Answer, That granting what they say for themselves, yet doth not this excuse them from Idolatry. For is not this the very thing that as Idolatry is expressly forbidden in the Second Commandment?



ment? That God's intentions in that Commandment were to prohibit all sorts of Images, whether of himself or of any Creature, and that it is by that Law rendered absolutely unlawful either to make them to represent God by them, or to worship him by them, is evident from other Scriptures in which this Law is expounded, and the reasons of it are given, as well as from the very Letter of the Commandment. The plain Letter of the Commandment is so clear, and so full against the use of all sorts of Images in the Worship of God, as nothing can be more. Of this prohibition a double reason is given.

1. Because at the giving of the Law in Mount *Horeb*, they saw no likeness or similitude, *Deut.* 4. 15. when God in that glorious and dreadful manner gave the Law, he would have appeared to them in some likeness or similitude if he had intended to be so represented and worshipped by them. But seeing he then made himself known to them under no such visible shape or representation, they were thereby given to understand, that God would not be so represented or worshipped.

2. Another reason of the prohibition of Images to represent God by, is taken from the infinity and incomprehensibleness of his Nature, which cannot be represented to

us by any thing that man's hands or art can frame, or by any Creature in Heaven or Earth. This reason is at large insisted on and amplified, *Isa. 40. 17, 18, &c. All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity. To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? Where afterwards God by the Prophet goes on shewing the gross folly and stupidity of all those who would represent the infinite and incomprehensible God by any finite and visible shape. By all this we may easily perceive what the intent of the Second Commandment was, and upon what grounds it forbids the use of Images in the Worship of God. And so much concerning the weakness and insufficiency of their first Plea.*

2. They say, the Images forbidden in the Second Commandment are only the Images of false Gods, or Idol Gods, and not those of the true God.

But the weakness of this Plea is manifest from what hath been said against their first Plea. For if Images of false Gods only were therein forbidden, why then doth God in the 4th of *Deuteronomy* before mentioned enforce his prohibition of Images from this, because at the giving of the Law they saw no Image or Visible shape? Doth he not mean, that they saw no similitude or likeness,

no shape or resemblance of himself, that is, of the true God? What else can be the import and meaning of that Argument? Again, Were they not the Images of the true God, which the Prophet speaks of, *If. 40.* and proves to be vain and foolish inventions of men, idly fancying that God, who is infinite and incomprehensible, might be so represented? Were false Gods of that infinite and incomprehensible nature, that they might not be so represented and worshipped? Doth not God most plainly and expressly speak of himself, when he saith, *To whom will ye liken God, and what likeness will ye compare unto him?*

3.<sup>d</sup> Another Plea of some of them, is, *Bellarmino* among the rest, That the Images forbidden in the Second Commandment are only those by which a man intends to represent God perfectly. A most pitiful and senseless shift. Who knows not, that 'tis impossible that the incomprehensible Nature and Essence of God should be represented fully and perfectly by any Image that can be made? So then, according to this gloss, the Second Commandment allows all manner of Images to be made and worshipped, provided that a man doth not think to represent God to perfection by them. If this only be the scope of the Commandment, then it seems it neither forbids the making nor worshipping  
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of any Images, but mens wrong intentions therein.

4. The last Plea is, That the making and use of Images of God, was only forbidden to the *Jews* in regard of their proneness to Idolatry, but it concerns not us Christians.

But, 1. Doth not the reason of the Commandment, drawn from the incomprehensibleness of God's Nature, make it as unlawful for us Christians, as for the Jews? Is not the same reason of perpetual force?

2. Are we Christians out of all danger of being tainted with the sin of Idolatry? Is there not in us also a proneness to that sin?

3. Doth not the Apostle in the New Testament make use of the same Argument, drawn from God's incomprehensible Nature, to shew the sin and vanity of such representations of God? Disputing against the Superstition and Idolatry of the *Athenians*, did he not declare unto them, that they ought not to think the Godhead to be like unto Gold, and Silver, and Stone, graven by Art and man's device, *Acts* 17.29.? And did he not condemn the *Romans* for having changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an Image made like to corruptible Man, and to Birds, and to four-footed Beasts and creeping things? *Ro* n. 1. 23. So then the represent-

representing God by Images was not only sinful in the *Jews*, but in the very *Heathens*, unto whom the very Light of Nature might have dictated better things, and have enabled them to frame conceptions of God more suitable to the Divine Perfections. How much more sinful then is it in *Christians*, who by the clearer light of the glorious Gospel may attain to be much better acquainted with the Nature of God than either the *Heathens* or the generality of the *Jews* were? In a word, our Saviour by that one Divine Oracle which he uttered, *John 4. 24. God is a spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth*, hath said enough to dash in pieces all Images of God, and to confute the gross Superstition and Idolatry of all such as worship God by them. If we allow him the sole Prerogative of prescribing and appointing the way and manner of his own Worship, as 'tis most reasonable that we should allow it him, the determination of this point is short, plain, and easy; God hath declared that he will not be represented or worshipped by Images, and therefore we may not do it, what carnal reasons and pretensions soever we may have for it.

So I have done with the Second Instance.



3. Another instance of the Idolatry which we charge them with, is their praying unto Saints and Angels. That Prayer is one special and principal part of that Divine Worship which is due to God alone, cannot be denied. Thereby we own those things in him, and ascribe those things to him which are properly and incommunicably belonging to God. We own him to be every where present, to take notice of and hear our Prayers: We own him to be the searcher of the heart, that perfectly understands how we inwardly stand affected, and whether we offer up unto him only words and external forms of Prayer, or Prayers indeed, that is to say, the secret desires of our hearts. By Prayer, we acknowledge and give him the glory of his Wisdom, Power, Goodness, Mercy, and Truth: We acknowledge him to be the Author and Bestower of all good things: We acknowledge our subjection to him, and our dependence on him, and that we cannot subsist without him. If there be all this in Prayer, as in effect there is, how can we without robbing God of his Honour, make our prayers, and direct our supplications to any else? Is any Creature in the World capable of all this Honour? Are they not all, the very best of them, in the same condition with our selves in relation to God? Are they not all as depen-

dependant on him, as we are? Have they not their being, their subsistence, their preservation, all their good things, from him? Have they any thing but what they have received from him? And do they retain what they have any longer than 'tis his good pleasure to continue to them the possession and enjoyment of it?

But, say the Papists, This we are all agreed in as well as you; and therefore we direct not our Prayers to Saints and Angels, as if it were in their power to do that for us which peculiarly appertains to God. We only pray to the Saints and Angels to pray unto God for us; and why may we not as lawfully desire the glorified Saints in Heaven to pray for us, as the Saints on Earth?

To this I Answer :

1. That there is no truth or ingenuity in this Answer. 'Tis notoriously known, and their Rosaries and Breviaries, their Forms of Prayer allowed by their Church, and constantly made use of by their Votaries, undeniably prove it against all contradiction or gainfaying, that they beg of the Saints and Angels, protection in their dangers, and deliverance in their distresses, comfort in their troubles, safeguard against their spiritual Enemies, and safe conduct to Heaven. Is there no more in all this than to desire the Saints to pray for them?

2. If

2. If it were true that they only desire the Saints to pray for them, as they most falsely and disingenuously affirm, What assurance have they that the Saints in Heaven can take knowledge of their Prayers? They must have the knowledge of our particular desires here on Earth, by special Revelation from God. Now what is there in Scripture that assures us, that as often as we beg their Prayers in our particular circumstances here below, God presently makes known to them what our desires are? Is there in the whole Scripture any the least intimation thereof? What a blind, superstitious, absurd, and senseless practice is it to offer up so many suits to them, who, for ought we know, are wholly ignorant of what we here do!

Hitherto concerning our Saviour's Reply to this Third Temptation. Now followeth in the last place, the issue of this and all the temptations with which the Devil at this time assaulted him, in the 11th. Verse: *Then the Devil leaveth him, and behold, Angels came, and ministered unto him.* Here are Two things:

1. The more immediate issue of Christ's temptations, in the former Clause of the Verse: *Then the Devil leaveth him.*

2. The more remote issue of them in the latter Clause : *And behold, Angels came, and ministred unto him.*

First, of the former of these, the more immediate issue of our Saviour's temptations :

*Then the Devil leaveth him ;*

*Then ;* that is, after he had ended all his temptations, as we have it more fully, *Luke 4. 13.* after he had tried his utmost skill, and set upon him with all those sorts of temptations by which he thought he was most likely to prevail. And thus it often seems good unto the most wise God, not only to suffer his Children to be tempted, but to permit Satan to make trial of them several ways, and to pursue them with variety of temptations, and those of the most horrible nature. Before Satan leaves them, he spits out all his venom, and vents all his rage and malice against them before he hath done with them. Into great plunges, and sore perplexities are they many times brought, and long are they this way exercised before they see an end of their troubles. We have had frequent Examples of those who have for many years been upon all occasions buffeted by Satan ; and there hath been scarce any kind of temptation but they have first or  
last

last been exercised with. Now while it pleaseth God to keep them under this discipline, and to permit Satan thus to molest and disquiet them, this consideration may be a great stay and support to these weather-beaten and distressed Souls, That nothing befalls them but what hath oft befallen the dearest of God's Children; yea, that Christ himself hath drank of the same Cup before them.

*Again, then the Devil leaveth him; that is, after that Christ also had fully Answered all his temptations, and at length given him a sharp rebuke, commanding him to be gone.*

Hence we learn, That though the Devil be resisted stoutly and manfully; yet he may not presently withdraw, and desist from giving us any further trouble. He may often renew his assaults, and come on again, though he hath been worsted more than once and twice. His malice provoketh and thrusteth him forward to make fresh attempts even where in regard of the resistance he hath met with, he seems to have small hopes of prevailing. If he cannot overcome us, 'tis some kind of satisfaction to his malice to be able to give trouble and disturbance to us.



Wherefore let no tempted Soul be discouraged, though it seem to have resisted Satan's temptations with small success, and to little purpose. 'Tis something to withstand the Enemy, and keep him from breaking in upon us, though we cannot immediately raise the siege, and beat him off. Though Satan still continue his Batteries against the Soul, yet if we courageously resist him, he shall never take it; and when he hath done all that he can, and yet obtaineth not his purpose, his Retreat after so many assaults will at length be so much the more shameful and ignominious.

Again, *Then the Devil leaveth him*; then, when he plainly sees there is no possibility of prevailing, and when also he meets with a severe rebuke. The Devil may for a while disturb and molest you, but he shall not always do it; his hour of temptation may be a very long one, it may be drawn out to a great length, but in due time there shall be an end of it. God hath set him his time, beyond which he shall not be able to disturb your peace one minute of an hour longer. How far soever his leave for winnowing you may extend, your stout and constant resistance, and Christ's powerful rebukes, shall at length put him to flight.

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Wherefore go on still to wait, and pray, and fight; I mean, to resist the Enemy of Souls; and be not weary of this course, for *in due time you shall reap, if you faint not, Gal. 6. 9.* You shall reap the peaceable fruit of Righteousness, those spiritual benefits and advantages, those inward consolations and refreshings which are the usual issue of trials and temptations. Though your heart may often fail you, and your spirit begin to sink, yet lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees: Yet a little while, and he that shall come (that shall come in to your effectual succour and relief against the Tempter) will come, and will not tarry.

But you will say, Why doth God so long permit many of his Children to be exercised this way? What are his designs therein?

A. I Answer, They are divers: Some of which have been formerly mentioned.

As, 1. That he may humble them. For temptations discover their weakness and frailty, and draw forth the corruptions of their hearts which before were hid from them. This makes them see what is in their nature, and causeth them to loath and abhor themselves for it.

2. Hereby he makes them see their need of Christ, which, it may be, they were never so sensible of before. This makes them highly prize him, and earnestly long after him.

3. The trouble and disquiet, the anguish and perplexity accompanying temptations, prepares them for after-comforts, renders them the more acceptable to them, and makes them the more thankful for them. The light is then most pleasant to a man, when he hath been long shut up in darkness.

4. By long temptations they attain a great deal of experience many ways. Experience of themselves, of their weakness and frailty in the hour of temptations, of their unbelief, of their proneness to call in question the truth of God's Promises, and to murmur against his Providence; of their proneness to make sinister and perverse constructions of his dealings with them, and to represent him to themselves as their Enemy. Experience of the malice, rage, and subtilty of the Devil, and the various methods and wiles he makes use of to ruin and destroy; or if that cannot be done, to sadden and deject, to trouble and disturb, to puzzle and intangle, to mislead and bewilder, to dishearten and discourage poor distressed Souls. Ex-  
perience

perience of God's Wisdom, Power, Goodness, and Truth, in supporting them under all their temptations, in turning the malice of Satan to their spiritual advantage, and in giving at length a comfortable issue out of their trials.

5. By their temptations he fits and qualifies them for advising, counselling, supporting, encouraging, and comforting others that are tempted. None are so fit to be helpful to others in their temptations, as those who having been tempted themselves, can speak from their own experience. Hence 'tis said, even of Christ himself, that having suffered, and having been tempted himself, he is able to succour them that are tempted, *Heb. 2. 18.* By a man's own temptations he gains not only skill and ability, but moreover tenderness and compassion, both which accomplish him for ministring relief to others in the like condition. In the 23d of *Exodus*, v. 9. God forbidding his people to carry themselves injuriously towards strangers, saith, *Thou shalt not oppress a stranger; for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.* They that have been Strangers themselves, know the heart of a stranger, they know the fears, and sorrows, and troubles which possess the heart of a stranger: And they

that have been tempted themselves, know the heart of the tempted, and therefore know how to apply themselves to administer suitable counsels and consolations to them with dexterity and tenderness.

6. By fore and long-continued temptations, God weans the tempted from the World, and from the things thereof. For whatsoever outward comforts, contents, and satisfactions they had before in the World; whatsoever they took most delight in, lay nearest their hearts, and had the greatest interest in their affections, all that is now come to be of no account with them; they taste no sweetness in it, they find no more savour or relish in it than in the White of an Egg: Yea, their grievous temptations do not only marr all their earthly comforts, and make them unfavoury, but oft-times imbitter all the sweets of the World to them, and turn them into Gall and Wormwood. The things that were sometimes the desire of their eyes, and the delight of their hearts, now they cannot endure to look upon, they are the worse for the sight of them.

7. As by temptations God chastens men for their former sins; so he sometimes makes use of temptations to prevent sin  
for



for the future, which he sees they are in danger of running into. Thus the Messenger of Satan must buffet the Apostle to keep him humble, and that he might not be exalted above measure for the abundance of Revelations, 2 Cor. 12. 7.

8. By the frequent incursion of temptations, God makes the tempted more watchful every way, but especially over their hearts, over their affections, over their thoughts, imaginations and fancies, where the Devil usually most abuseth and disquieteth them.

By the frequent incursion of temptation, he stirs them up to Prayer, and to a more diligent and conscientious attendance on the use of all means whereby they may be kept from sin.

9. By temptations God weans them from the World, makes them more Heavenly-minded: Whereas before the World took up their hearts; the pleasures, or profits, or honours, or the empty and insignificant Toys and Trifles thereof, were ever running in their minds. Now since they have been exercised with grievous temptations, these things signify nothing with them, for they find that none of them can afford any

any comfort or relief to a tempted, afflicted, disconsolate Soul ; none of these things are able to contribute any thing towards the quieting of a troubled Conscience, or the cure of a wounded Spirit. They find that they are things of another nature which they must be looking after, if ever they hope to meet with any effectual relief.

These great things being aimed at, and designed in our temptations, cannot easily be attained ; 'tis not a little exercise in the School of temptation that will do it : It must be a long course of temptations, which the Soul must be under for the acquiring of them, at least in any eminent degree. And they must also be temptations of several sorts and sizes that will serve to so many purposes, and answer so many ends as God aims at in the temptations with which he exerciseth his people.

But besides what hath been said, There are other causes why some persons are more subject to temptations than others, and why their temptations are of much longer continuance.

1. Some are deeply Melancholick ; that is their natural temper and complexion.  
Against

Against these Satan hath a great advantage. Upon the dark spirits of these persons he can more easily fasten his temptations; and when he hath done it, they are not without much difficulty delivered and freed from those impressions which he hath made upon them. What they are once possessed of, they most tenaciously and obstinately retain.

2. Others are of a fearful and timorous disposition; and this also disposeth them to take impressions easily from Satan's temptations, and to retain them long when they have taken them.

3. Others have made themselves the more obnoxious to temptations, by having contracted the guilt of some horrid and heinous sins, whereby they have laid themselves open to Satan. If Satan taking his advantage, hath driven on these upon the brink of the dreadful precipice of despair, it may be very long before they can be recovered, quieted, and upon good grounds settled and established.

4. The gross ignorance of others in matters of Religion, and in what concerns  
their

their Souls, makes them both more subject to be abused by Satan's temptations, and less capable of being recovered and rescued out of the snare of the Devil, when once they have been taken captive by him.

So from the immediate issue of the temptations with which the Devil assaulted our Saviour, I come to speak of the more remote issue of them: *Behold, Angels came, and ministred unto him.* So we read, *Luke 22. 43.* that when he was in an Agony before his Passion, there appeared an Angel unto him from Heaven, strengthening him. Christ is the Lord of Angels; of whom 'tis said, *Heb. 1. 6. Let all the Angels of God worship him.* They are all his Servants, most ready upon all occasions to attend on him, and minister to him. And as they are ever in a readiness to do him service, so are they for his sake, and in obedience to his commands, always most ready and willing to be employed for the succour, relief, and comfort of such as belong to him; which, as 'tis a great honour to such poor, vile, and sinful Creatures as we are; so 'tis a great support, encouragement, and comfort to us, in all the dangers and distresses, trials and temptations which  
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in this life we are subject to. Angels being Spirits, are of an invisible nature, and so the reliefs and succours we receive from them are not discernible by our bodily eyes ; but we know not how much we are beholden to them , and how many of our deliverances, supports, and comforts we are, under God, indebted to them for , and owe to their Ministration. Let us humbly and thankfully acknowledge the high favour which God vouchsafeth us, in imploying those glorious Spirits for our good ; and that he is pleased to make them instruments of our preservation and protection , of our relief and comfort when we most stand in need thereof.

But to return to the Text ; when the Devil had ended his temptations, and at Christ's rebuke had left him, *then Angels came, and ministred to him.*

Here Two things are observable,

1. That the Angels came not to Minister comfort while the Tempter was assailing our Saviour ; but after that he had done his work , and was gone And thus is' God pleased to deal with his Children ; for most wise and gracious



cious ends he hides his Face from them in the hour of temptation, withdraws the sensible influences of his gracious Presence from them, and reserves his comforts till afterwards. Wherefore let no tempted Soul be too much discouraged. Though it be night with it for the present, yet the day will come and scatter all that darkness which 'tis incompassed with. *Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart, Psal. 97. 11.*

2. We may observe, That temptations make way for, and end in comfort. And ordinarily the forer and more grievous the temptations are that any man is exercised with, the sweeter and the stronger, the more durable and lasting are those consolations that attend them. This may teach us,

1. To wait for the issue and blessed fruit of all our trials and temptations patiently.

2. To observe the end of the Lord, as St. James speaks of God's dealings with Job. James 5. 11. To observe the issue of our temptations, and the great advantages of them which redound to us in the Conclusion,

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Conclusion, how sad and disconsolate  
foever our condition may seem to be in  
the mean time. *Whofo is wife, and will  
ponder these things, shall understand the  
loving-kindness of the Lord, Psal. 107. 43.*

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